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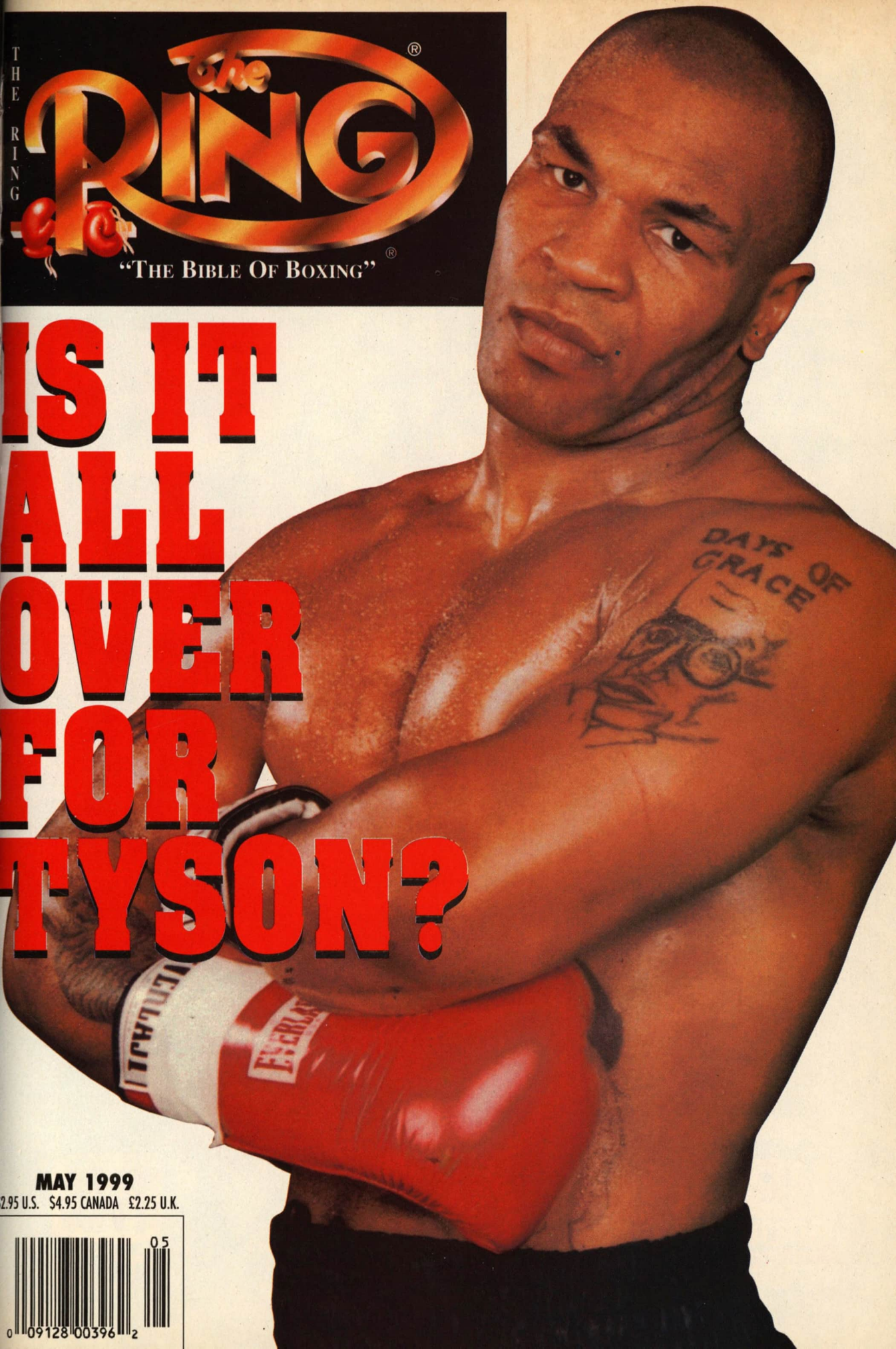

IS IT ALL OVER FOR TYSON?

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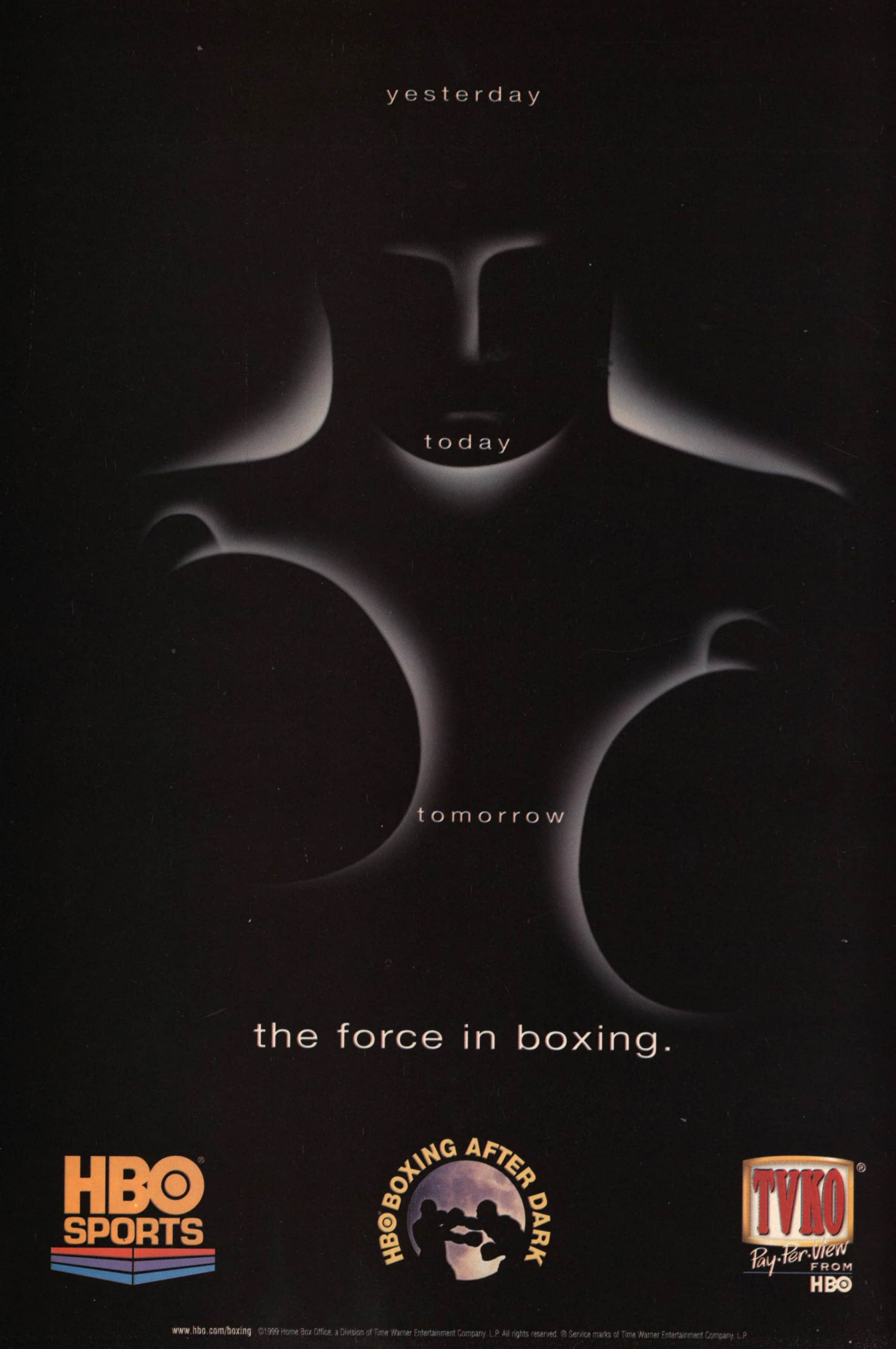

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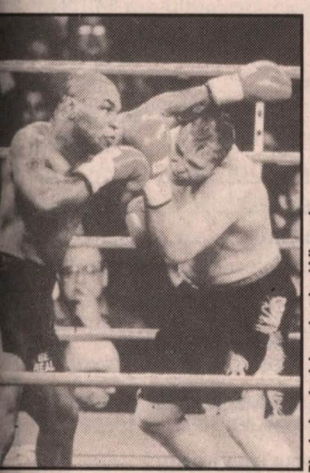

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

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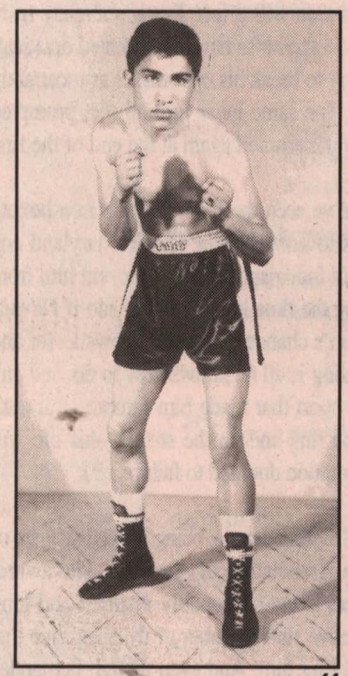

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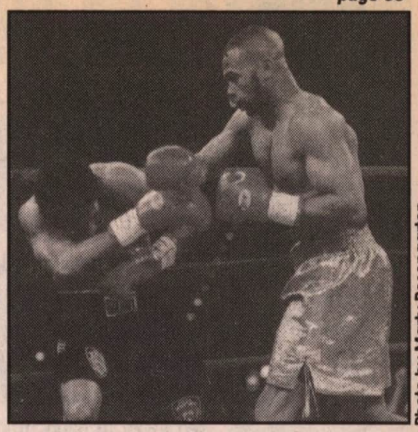

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RINGSIDE

Twenty days after knocking out Frans Botha, Mike Tyson was back behind bars, sentenced to a year in jail for assaulting two men during a road-rage incident that took place in Gaithersburg, Maryland, in August 1998. In a scene eerily similar to one that took place in an Indianapolis, Indiana, courtroom in 1992, Tyson was led away in handcuffs, both his personal freedom and future as a fighter in serious jeopardy.

The sentence handed down by Montgomery County District Court Judge Stephen Johnson was unexpected. Tyson had pleaded no-contest to the charges because of a plea-bargaining agreement worked out with former state's attorney Robert Dean, who told the fighter that in return for the plea he would not ask for jail time. Also, both of the men Tyson allegedly attacked, with whom he had already reached an out-of-court settlement, stated that they did not want him to go to jail. But during the interval between the no-contest plea and the sentencing, Doug Gansler defeated Dean in an election and then reneged on the deal made by his predecessor.

Regardless of whether you believe Tyson got exactly what he deserved or that he was a victim of an overzealous prosecutor out to make a name for himself, the bottom line is that things have radically changed since his one-punch kayo of Botha. Although Tyson is expected to appeal, it's highly unlikely that his next fight, originally slated for April 24 in Las Vegas, will take place as scheduled. He also has to worry about his parole being revoked in Indiana and his boxing license being yanked again by the Nevada State Athletic Commission.

You also have to wonder how further incarceration will affect Tyson's already rusty ring skills and volatile mental health. Not only did he appear to have deteriorated drastically as a fighter in the Botha fight, his flagrant attempt to break his opponent's arm certainly indicated that his emotions are still running wild. The same inner turmoil that prompted him to fly into a rage following a minor fender-bender erupted again at the end of the first round of the Botha fight.

But despite this latest debacle, I doubt that we've seen the last of Tyson in a boxing ring. Even the worse case scenario, where he has to serve both a year in Maryland and then, assuming parole is repealed, additional time in Indianapolis, won't prevent him from fighting again. He'll still only be in his late-30s by the time he's released, and if Nevada doesn't want him, someplace else will. True, Tyson's chance of success grows lesser and lesser with each passing day of inactivity, but fighting is all he knows how to do, and any chance for salvation will inevitably be tied to the sport that made him famous. But until Tyson finds a way to control himself—both in the ring and on the streets—his life will continue to be a living hell and any attempt at redemption doomed to failure.

***

Congratulations to regular contributor Bernard Fernandez on being named winner of the Nat Fleischer Award by the Boxing Writers Association of America. The award, which recognizes excellence in boxing journalism, is unquestionably justified and long overdue. I have always found it curious that no active staff member of the magazine that Fleischer founded has ever won the award named after him. And even though Fernandez isn't technically a staffer, his copy graces the pages of enough issues that he's practically one of the family. Way to go, Bernie. You've done both THE RING and yourself proud.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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The RING

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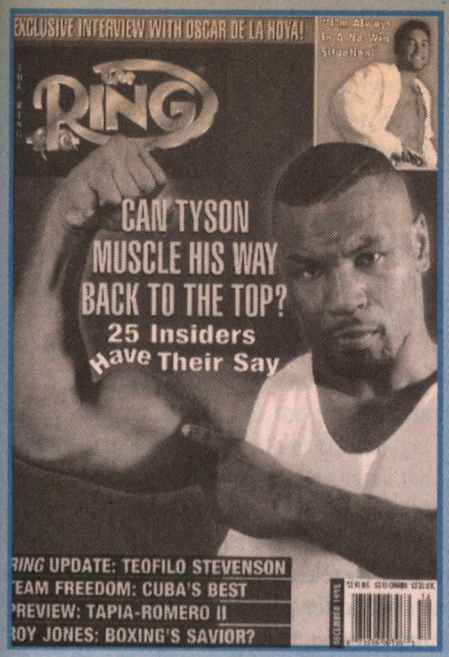

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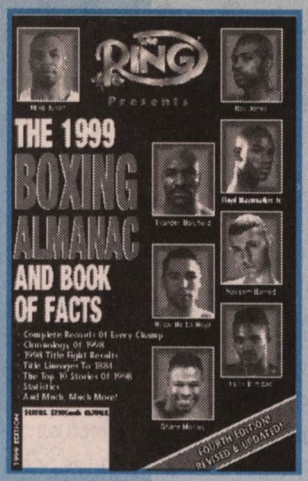

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COME OUT WRITING

We welcome your letters, which may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

PROVE IT, SHANE!

I have been a fan of boxing for over a decade, and in that time I have studied the fight game's history of great fighters. I continue to be baffled by everyone's excitement and overrating of Shane Mosley. He has done nothing to be considered on anyone's pound-for-pound list. He has never beaten an established champion or a fighter in his prime. In my opinion, his record resembles a fighter who is still learning his trade. His lackluster title-winning victory over Phillip Holiday showed us little, and wins over shopworn John-John Molina and James Leija proved nothing as well.

He also struggled with unknown challenger Manuel Gomez, and the rest of his title challengers were non-entities. Shane Mosley may become a great fighter, but he currently is far off from that mark. He needs wins over Israel Cardona, Ivan Robinson, Arturo Gatti, or Vince Phillips to be taken seriously as a pound-for-pound contender. Fighting Golden Johnson (a Cardona victim) is not the right way. So far I have seen nothing sweet enough about Shane to deserve his nickname.

DEREK BONNETT
Vernon, CT

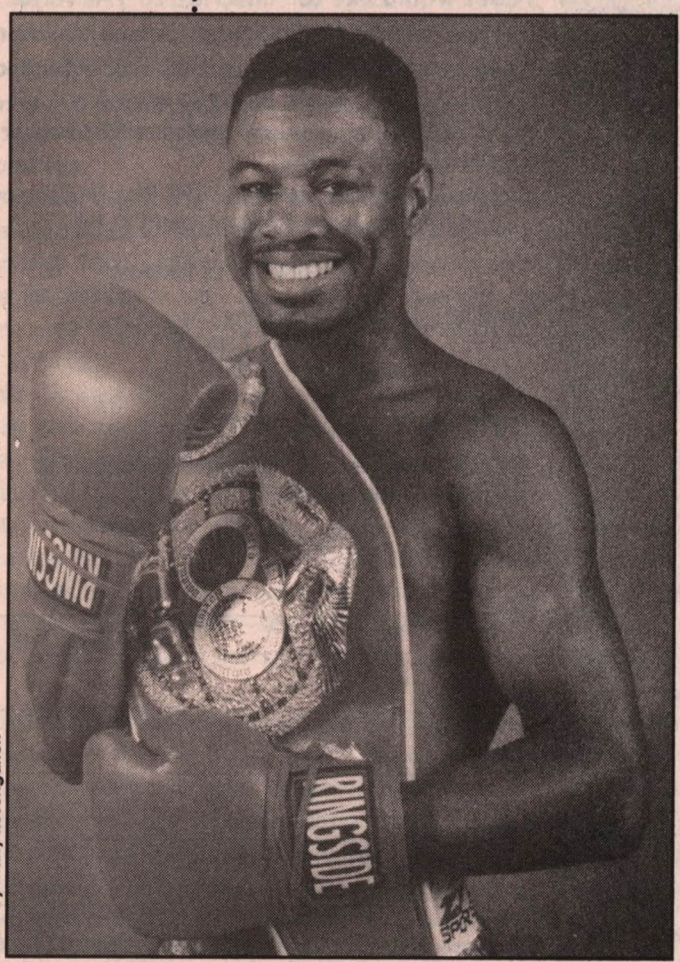


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

To place Shane Mosley in the company of greats like Sugar Ray Robinson is premature, says reader Derek Bonnett. Mosley will have to beat some name opponents if he plans on earning the "Sugar" nickname.

REJECTING ROY

I am sick of seeing Roy Jones' name in the pound-for-pound ratings. Besides his whipping of James Toney, what has he done? He beat an old Virgil Hill, lost to a fighter who was unranked at the time (Montell Griffin), and is now making a living picking on guys like light-hitting middleweight Otis Grant. While I understand the competition at light heavyweight is slim, at least fight the top fighters. Fabrice Tiozzo, Dariusz Michalczewski, Reggie Johnson, Robin Reid, and Frank Liles are all fighters close to Jones' weight who could provide some competition.

Roy, it's time to earn your ranking instead of having it "Otis Granted" to you. Pick on someone your own size, or are you scared?

SHANE FERGUSON
Smyrna, GA

GET OVER IT, LARRY

I applauded Pete Ehrmann's review of Larry Holmes' book *Against The Odds* in the Holiday 1998 issue. Poor, poor Larry! Relatively young, very healthy, and extremely wealthy, but still complaining about how life has treated him rough because he's black.

As usual, he compared himself to Gerry Cooney, who he said got all the breaks because he's white, while he, poor, poor Larry, had none. Larry points out that before the Cooney fight, he was subjected to racial slurs, but fails to mention he was forever hurling them at others. He kept calling Gerry "a great white hope for white dopes," and he later taunted David Bey by saying, "You're a half-breed, and whites bleed."

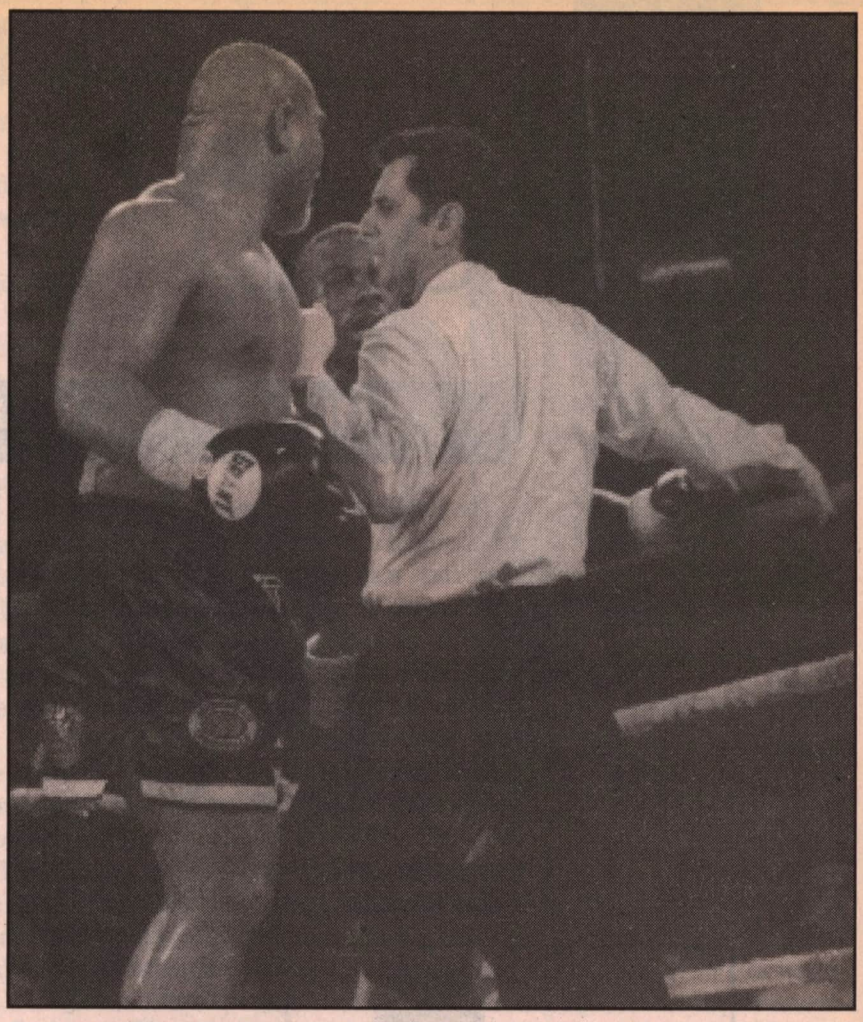
The marketability and success of the many black champions of the modern era makes Larry's point that white fighters get all the breaks a lame one. Take away all the black heavyweight champs for the last 40 years, and how many are left? His point would have been well-taken years ago, but, thankfully, times have changed.

Larry Holmes was a worthy champion who took on all comers and deserves to be ranked with the great heavyweights, but he should stop waving that flag of his. He broke the pole long ago.

BILL LECKIE
Winnipeg, Manitoba

LET THEM FIGHT!

I was very much looking forward to viewing what I felt were two well-matched fights being televised by HBO on December 19. Soon afterward, though, I was left disappointed due to what I viewed as quick stoppages resulting from there being no standing eight-count in Florida.



Premature endings, like the one in the David Tua-Hasim Rahman fight, have to be stopped, urges reader Derrick Johnson. Rahman was still throwing punches when referee Telis Assimenios halted the bout in favor of Tua.

The result of the Hasim Rahman-David Tua fight was a blatant injustice. Rahman was well ahead on points, boxing beautifully, and dictating the tempo of what was a very entertaining fight. Suddenly, Rahman got hurt by a punch that occurred after the bell sounded to end the ninth round. Tua came charging out in the 10th and swarmed all over Rahman. Trying to defend himself, Rahman slipped punches, rolled with punches, and at a very key point, punched back. Granted, Rahman did catch some major blows, but he did punch back. The referee had no reason to stop that fight.

In the Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Angel Manfredy fight, the questionable stoppage was more logical. The ref in that fight could justify his actions because Manfredy did not punch back. But my contention is that two evenly matched fighters in skill and desire should be allowed to fight on without any doubts or second-guessing from officials.

DERRICK JOHNSON
Landover, MD

MAKE THAT 11 REASONS

After reading your "10 Reasons 1999 Will Be A Great Year For Boxing" in the February 1999 issue of THE RING, I'm wondering why you made no mention of Roy Jones. Yes, Roy may be a giant in a so-so division, and good matchups aren't even on the horizon for him. But the exciting nature of Jones' ability and his greatness can overcome this. He is, after all, the present generation's answer to Sugar Ray Robinson, and he's a good guy to boot. Just his presence adds enormously to boxing. Also, if a guy like Lou Del Valle can give Jones a competitive scrap, maybe there are others who can do the same, even if they eventually lose. The importance of Roy Jones to boxing cannot be overstated, or ignored.

CHRIS SPECK
Durham, NC

NO MORE JUNK

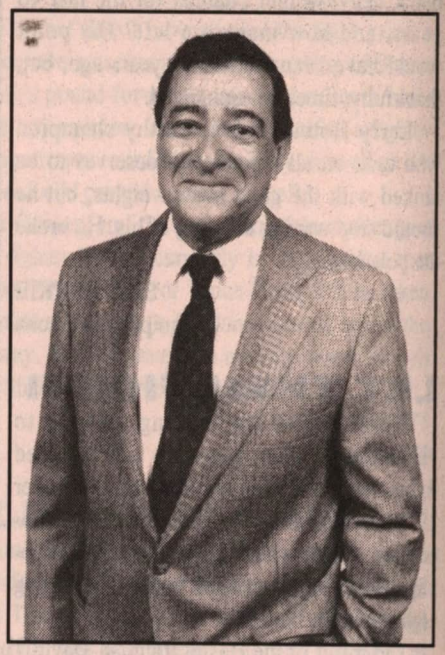
I'm writing to you in reference to the January 9 HBO *Boxing After Dark* card, which featured Roy Jones' latest defense of the WBC light heavyweight belt. The WBC should be ashamed of itself for making NYPD's Richard Frazier a mandatory challenger. That was a joke to watch, and the man didn't belong in the ring with the talent of Roy Jones. With matches like this, where promoters are buddies with presidents of organizations and get their boxers a payday, it's no wonder by Senator John McCain is lobbying for government control. HBO color analyst Larry Merchant surely summed it up very well by saying, "We simply brought you junk."

JAMES HAVDOUGLAS
Palm Coast, FL ■

ROUND ONE

HALL OF FAME CLASS OF '99 ANNOUNCED

The 10th group of honorees to be inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, may lack the star power of previous years, but the 17 legendary figures being enshrined this June are still a deserving and accomplished bunch. All six living inductees, promoter **Bob Arum**, heavyweight great **Jimmy Bivins**, junior bantam titlist **Khaosai Galaxy**, featherweight champion **Eusebio Pedroza**, publicist **Irving Rudd**, and manager/promoter **Mickey Duff**, are expected to attend Hall of Fame Weekend, according to IBHOF Executive Director Ed Brophy.



Bob Arum

The attendance of Top Rank chief Arum will be especially noteworthy because of the irate stance the promoter took against the Hall of Fame when rival Don King was inducted in '97. Also compelling will be the attendance of Bivins because of how close he came to dying last year. Bivins, 86-25-1 (31), never received a shot at a world title, but he was still one of the most exceptional fighters of his era, defeating four other Hall of Famers during the 1940s and '50s.

Jimmy Bivins

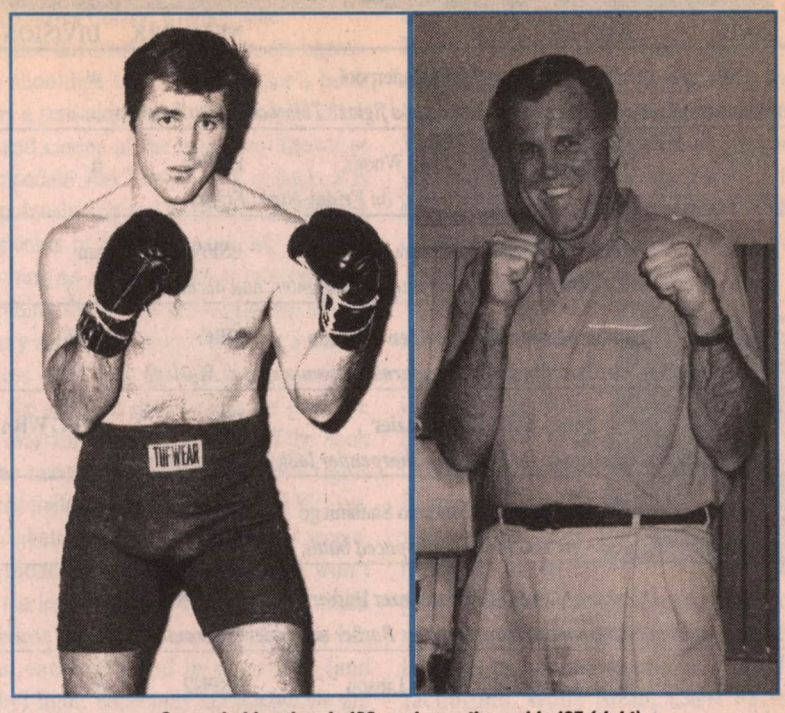
Galaxy, the Thailander who reigned as WBA 115-pound champ from 1984-'91, made a division-record 19 successful defenses. He retired as champion with a sterling 49-1 (43) log. Panamanian Pedroza, 42-6-1 (25), also made 19 successful title defenses, winning the WBA feather belt in 1978 and holding it until '85. There are also two posthumous inductees in the Modern category: **Vicente Saldivar**, 38-3 (27), the Mexican great who reigned as world featherweight champion from 1964-'67 and as WBC 126-pound champ in 1970; and **Lew Jenkins**, 65-39-5 (47), the Texan who held the world lightweight title from 1940-'41.

The other members of the Class of '99: **Johnny Coulon**, **Sam McVey**, **Freddie Steele**, and **Lew Tendler** in the Old-Timer category; **Giuseppe Ballarate**, **Murray Goodman**, **Jimmy Johnston**, and **Tom O'Rourke** in the Non-Participant category; and **Bill Richmond** in the Pioneer category.

Those interested in more information regarding the June 10-13 Induction Weekend can contact the IBHOF at (315) 697-7095, or visit the Hall of Fame's official Website at www.IBHOF.com.

—Eric Raskin

JERRY QUARRY, 1945-1999



Quarry in his prime in '69, and near the end in '95 (right)

Nine years ago, when Jerry Quarry was asked what he'd like to be doing 20 years thence, the former heavyweight contender's answer was surprisingly poignant. He would like to operate a country store, he said, "because that's when you need people and people need you."

Like his quest for the heavyweight championship that left him, in Quarry's own words, "always a bridesmaid, never a bride," that plaintive dream was fated to remain unfulfilled. But when Quarry died at age 53 on January 3, upon being removed from a life support system after pneumonia and cardiac arrest struck in the final days of 1998, he left behind memories of a proud, gallant fighter who probably would have reached championship heights had his era been any other than the one that also gave us Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier.

While Quarry lost to both, on the plus side of his 53-9-4 (33) record were wins over former champ Floyd Patterson and top contenders Thad Spencer, Ron Lyle, Mac Foster, Buster Mathis, and Earnie Shavers. Those victories kept the native of Bakersfield, California, in the top 10 for most of a professional career that, discounting several ill-conceived comebacks, ran from 1965-75.

His fighting excellence was overlooked by the obituary writers and self-styled experts who dismissed him as a punching bag because of the widely publicized *pugilistica dementia* that to many made Quarry a poster boy for everything wrong with boxing. Unquestionably, the final years of his life were tragic, and there is no getting around the fact that punches to the head accounted for the damage. But the young man who attended 34 different schools before becoming the first member of his nomadic family in 28 years to graduate from high school saw the sport as a preferable alternative to making a living "changing tires at the Greyhound bus station for $99.50 a week." And because of boxing, he attained worldwide fame, adulation, and, according to press reports, $2.1-million in purses (although Quarry himself insisted he only netted a half-million).

It was a hard road mapped out for Quarry and his brothers Jimmy, Mike, and Bob by their father. "He was a fighter," said Jerry, who put on the gloves when he was three years old, "and he wanted his boys to be fighters." In 1992, after his final bout, Jerry disavowed any such intention where his own son Jonathan, then six, was concerned. "He will not get in the ring. I don't want to see anybody get in the ring," he said.

By his own admission, Quarry was not always prepared physically and mentally for his biggest fights. He fought Jimmy Ellis for the WBA heavyweight title in 1967 with fractured vertebrae, and lost a decision. Two weeks before he fought Frazier for his slice of the title on June 23, 1969, Quarry read an article accusing him of cowardice against Ellis, and set out to disprove the charge by walking right into Smokin' Joe. It was, he later admitted, "one of the most stupid things I could do." In a thrilling fight, Frazier stopped him in seven. "They never thought I had a lot of heart 'til the Frazier fight," Quarry said. "It's a damned shame I had to show 'em that way."

Did he stay at it too long? I thought so, and said so in print when Quarry scheduled a 1990 fight in Wisconsin to launch the comeback he hoped would result in a Foreman-like financial bonanza. A medical study done several years earlier for *Sports Illustrated* had already flagged incipient brain damage. When Quarry opened the door for our first interview, he thumped his flat, hard stomach and growled, "Do I look like someone who's brain dead?" But he softened when I presented him with the large scrapbook I kept on him when nothing I was studying in high school in the '60s was as exciting or worthwhile as his career.

It was a career conducted honorably by a sensitive and proud man who never protested the punches he couldn't or didn't duck. "Nobody's promised breakfast in this life," he often said. While he made his name and fame in a merciless profession, "he had a gentle heart," said Quarry's sister, Wilma. Contrary to published reports that had him totally out of it at the end, "he still knew us all, and God blessed us all," she said.

The family has set up the Jerry Quarry Memorial Fund to help pay his final hospital expenses. Contributions may be sent to 9408 Spokane Ave., Bakersfield, CA 93312.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
1-8-99	Ray Oliveira D 10 Fitz Vanderpool	ESPN2	w	C	B	B
Who says sparring partners don't make good fights? This was tight all the way						
1-8-99	Neilson Taoine KO 4 Sean Woods	ESPN2	h	C-	C-	C-
What a surprise; another Bill Cayton fighter on ***Friday Night Fights***						
1-8-99	Vinny Pazienza KO 9 Undra White	ESPN2	sm	C+	C+	C+
Pazienza's title shot better come soon; White, a clubfighter, had his moments						
1-9-99	**Shane Mosley KO 7 Golden Johnson**	**HBO**	**IBF l**	**A**	**C+**	**B-**
Still wondering why Pito Cardona keeps turning down a shot at Mosley?						
1-9-99	**Roy Jones KO 2 Rick Frazier**	**HBO**	**WBC/WBA lh**	**A**	**F**	**F-**
This embarrassment made De La Hoya-Charpentier look like Zale-Graziano						
1-9-99	Kofi Jantuah W 10 Santiago Samaniego	FOXSN	jm	C	A-	B
Jantuah rallies late to get nod in even, fast-paced battle						
1-9-99	Ramon Garbey KO 9 Leeonzer Barber	FOXSN	c	C+	C+	C+
Ponderous but heavy-handed Garbey makes Barber surrender mid-round						
1-15-99	James Crayton KO 7 Chris Linson	ESPN2	l	C	C+	C+
Linson game but not strong enough to overcome Crayton's experience						
1-15-99	Thomas Tate KO 10 Merqui Sosa	ESPN2	sm	A-	B+	A
Sosa pushes Tate all the way before falling to right hand; excellent scrap						
1-16-99	Goyo Vargas W 12 Ben Tackie	PPV	l	B+	B	B-
Vargas' experience and body attack too much for still-green Tackie						
1-16-99	**Roberto Garcia W 12 John-John Molina**	**PPV**	**IBF jl**	**A**	**B-**	**B+**
Didn't Garcia notice that when Mosley stopped Molina he did it with bodyshots?						
1-16-99	Mike Tyson KO 5 Francois Botha	PPV	h	A	B-	A-
Love Tyson or hate him, if this didn't get your blood pumping, you may not have a pulse						
1-16-99	Zab Judah KO 4 Wilfredo Negron	PPV	jw	A-	C+	C+
Add Judah to the list that includes Reid, Vargas, and Mayweather; the kid can fight						
1-21-99	Michael Rush W 10 Art Pendergrass	USSB	h	D	C+	C
This proved little for prospect Rush, but a win is a win						
1-21-99	Razor Ruddock KO 2 Tony LaRosa	USSB	h	C+	F	D-
This was a disgrace, even by "Heavyweight Explosion" standards						
1-22-99	Paul Spadafora W 10 Rocky Martinez	ESPN2	l	C	B+	C
Martinez starts well enough but fades late; Spadafora fast but lacks pop						
1-22-99	Omar Sheika KO 3 Anwar Oshana	ESPN2	sm	B-	B+	B
Oshana accomplishes the impossible: He makes Sheika look like Oscar De La Hoya						

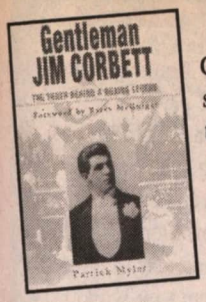
Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN–Fox SportsNet; Uni–Univision

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



Gentleman Jim Corbett? Maybe alongside the always blustery and often blotto John L. Sullivan—but the ex-bank clerk who took Sullivan's title 107 years ago was no Prince Valiant, according to *Gentleman Jim Corbett: The Truth Behind A Boxing Legend* (Robson Books Ltd., 243 pages, £17.95). While crediting Corbett for introducing elegance and style to the sport in and out of the ring, Dublin boxing columnist and author Patrick Myler convincingly demonstrates that the nickname by which the dandified Irishman was commonly known did not fit as snugly as the thong-like trunks Corbett liked to wear in action. For instance, Corbett had in common with the current President of the United States a novel use for his cigars. Apparently, the heavyweight chief executive liked to singe his wife's face with them, among other abusive acts.

Usually charming, debonair, and conscious of his image in public (to the point that he sometimes conspicuously hefted a glass of milk in taverns), Corbett and manager William A. Brady consciously crafted a persona for the second heavyweight champion of the modern era that didn't always cover Corbett's darker side.

While unvarnished and blunt, the impression shouldn't be left that Myler's book offers a sensationalized, narrow look at the life and career of the man also known as "Pompadour Jim." From front to back, it is scrupulously fair and balanced, lauding the practitioner of artful footwork and scientific punching as an innovator responsible for upgrading the image of boxing just over a century ago by showing "there was a way to success other than through brute strength." And the author is quicker than the evidence may warrant in letting Corbett off the hook in the matter of highly suspicious fights against Sailor Tom Sharkey and Kid McCoy.

Corbett's place in ring history is secure, and though this welcome appraisal won't gild the legend the way he and Brady would doubtless prefer, it's honesty casts the life of an early ring god in an earthly (and earthy) light. Especially commendable are the nicely arranged and detailed appendixes concerning the making of the 1942 film classic *Gentleman Jim*, Corbett's ring record, his stage and screen performances, Corbett memorabilia, and even other Corbetts in ring history.

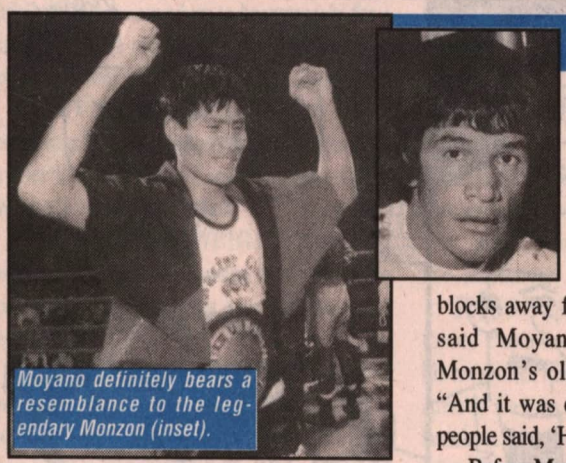
—Pete Ehrmann

If you're a teenage girl, or anybody else for that matter, who wants to look at scads of gorgeous photographs of Oscar De La Hoya, *12 Rounds With Oscar De La Hoya: An Illustrated Tribute To Boxing's Brightest Star* (144 pages, Beckett Publications, $24.95 paperback) is for you. If, however, you're a hardcore boxing fan searching for new insights into "The Golden Boy" or his career, you're far better served sticking with THE RING and its sister magazines.

The publisher hired some pretty good writers, including regular RING contributors Ivan Goldman and Ron Borges, to provide what little copy there is, but it's pretty much the same old same old, and not much of it at that. The real stars of the book are the photographers—Al Bello, Jed Jacobsohn, Holly Stein, Chris Farina, Anthony Neste, etc.—whose work also frequently graces the pages of the magazine you're reading. And while *12 Rounds* is a beautifully put together package, perhaps the best part is that a publisher that usually concentrates on mainstream sports star like Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, and Wayne Gretzky, has added a book about a boxer to its catalogue.

—Nigel Collins

LIVING LEGACY?



Moyano definitely bears a resemblance to the legendary Monzon (inset).

They call him "Monzon" Moyano in tribute to Carlos Monzon, the greatest boxing hero Argentina has ever produced. But is there more than just a facial resemblance between 160-pound prospect Ramon Pedro Moyano and the Hall of Fame middleweight champion who died in 1995? Perhaps. The 26-year-old Moyano, 19-2-2 (12), claims that he could be Monzon's son.

"We lived only three blocks away from where Monzon lived," said Moyano, who is handled by Monzon's old trainer, Amilcar Brusa. "And it was embarrassing for me when people said, 'He is the son of Monzon.'"

Before Monzon's death, Moyano visited him in prison, where the ex-champ was serving time for killing his girlfriend, Alicia Munuz. And while Monzon didn't exactly say he was the young boxer's father, he did tell him that he "could" be his father because he'd had "a lot of women" in his life.

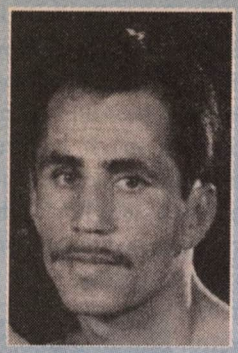
Moyano's mother, Bernarda Franco, is unable to shed any light on the situation because she was murdered in 1997, a few weeks after an article about the Monzon-Moyano connection was published in *El Grafico*, Argentina's leading sports magazine.

"She told me she was going to tell me the complete truth," said Moyano shortly after his mother's death. "But now everything will be a mystery. I can't know exactly if I am his son or not, but when I'm in the ring, I feel he is guiding me."

Ironically, one of Moyano's most significant wins came against Dario Galindez (KO 2), son of another famous Argentine fighter, two-time light heavyweight champion Victor Galindez.

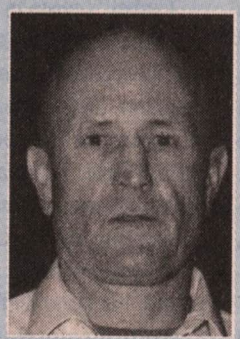
—Carlos Irusta

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Hernandez: Exits with class

Just a few months ago, prior to being defeated by **Floyd Mayweather Jr.** for the WBC super featherweight title, **Genaro Hernandez** was ranked by many among boxing's pound-for-pound best. Now, at the age of 32 and with two world title reigns to his credit, Hernandez has announced his retirement. A couple of weeks after the loss to Mayweather, "Chicanito" experienced double vision and decided to take a series of medical exams that revealed what he called a "dot" of blood in his brain. "The doctor tells me that I could go ahead," Hernandez said, "but I'm not going to take no gamble. I did what I had to do for 14 years." Hernandez, 38-2-1 (17), intends to stay in the boxing game as a Spanish-language fight analyst for HBO and Univision ... Another of boxing's best announced his retirement at the tail end of 1998, as prominent referee **Mills Lane** gave up his job as a third man to focus solely on his television work as a color analyst and as host of his syndicated courtroom show, *Judge Mills Lane*. The 31-year officiating veteran achieved his greatest fame when he disqualified **Mike Tyson** in the "Bite Fight" rematch with **Evander Holyfield** ... Interesting news for those who feel rapid weight loss is one of boxing's biggest problems: The **WBC** is instituting new weigh-in requirements for title fights in '99. There are to be mandatory weigh-ins 90 days before the bout, with fighters having to weigh no more than 10 percent over the class limit, and another weigh-in a week before the fight, by which time the combatants must be no more than five percent over ... On November 29, 1998, the family of deceased clubfighter **John Gross** won a major victory for boxing when the New York Court of Appeals reversed an earlier decision and ruled that boxers cannot be denied workers' compensation. The previous ruling had argued that the intent in boxing was to injure, so damage caused by the sport was not covered by workers' comp ... Promoter **Frank Warren**, who formerly worked with **Naseem Hamed** but has lately been struggling through tax troubles, agreed in court in mid-January to pay **Don King** $12-million to end their partnership and settle their differences ... Congratulations go out to Top Rank matchmaker **Bruce Trampler** for capturing third place in the Nevada Film Office 1998 Screenwriters Competition. Trampler's winning work is entitled *Cometh A King* ... And on a sad note, legendary Philadelphia trainer **Sam Solomon** died of heart failure in December at the age of 83. Solomon, who had more than 300 amateur fights and also was a catcher in baseball's Negro leagues, worked with the likes of **Muhammad Ali**, **Sonny Liston**, **Leon** and **Michael Spinks**, and **Matthew Saad Muhammad** in his nearly 40 years as a trainer.



Lane: Ref retires

THE PUNCHLINES

"Muhammad Ali set the stage, but there's never been a fighter bigger than Mike Tyson. If you don't think that's true, look at the gate receipts."

—Tyson, at a press conference promoting his fight with Frans Botha, which didn't come close to selling out the MGM Grand

"The decline of Western Civilization is televised live, Friday nights on ESPN2."

—Boxing writer Michael Katz, suggesting the far-reaching impact of *Friday Night Fights* using Max Kellerman as their studio analyst

AL KRATZER'S VIEW

"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Welterweight
2. **ROY JONES** Light Heavyweight
3. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Heavyweight
4. **FELIX TRINIDAD** Welterweight
5. **MARK JOHNSON** Junior Bantamweight
6. **SHANE MOSLEY** Lightweight
7. **RICARDO LOPEZ** Strawweight
8. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR.** Junior Lightweight
9. **NASEEM HAMED** Featherweight
10. **JOHNNY TAPIA** Bantamweight

(For period ended January 31, 1999)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Despite the decidedly uneven nature of his performance, Mike Tyson's fifth-round, one-punch knockout of Frans Botha was good enough for the two-time former heavyweight champion to re-enter the rankings at number four. Michael Moorer, who hasn't fought since being knocked out by Evander Holyfield in November 1997, drops out due to inactivity. Shannon Briggs fell from fifth to 10th because he hasn't had a significant fight since losing to Lennox Lewis in March '98.

CRUISERWEIGHT: Although IBF titlist Arthur Williams moved up to heavyweight for a tuneup, he will continue to campaign at 190 pounds and remains number three at cruiser.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Roy Jones' second-round TKO of unworthy challenger Rick Frazier keeps him head and shoulders above everybody else in the division.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT: Streaking veteran Thomas Tate advances from seventh to sixth on the strength of his exciting 10th-round kayo of Merqui Sosa.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Changes on hold until after the upcoming Bernard Hopkins-Robert Allen rematch. Bert Schenk's fourth-round kayo of Freeman Barr wasn't quite enough for the German to crack the rankings, but he's closing in.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Spain's Francisco Castillejo enters at number three, thanks to his majority decision over Keith Mullings to take the WBC belt. The close loss drops Mullings to fourth. Inert Emmett Linton exits to make room for Castillejo.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No adjustments this month, but with the Oscar De La Hoya-Ike Quartey and Pernell Whitaker-Felix Trinidad bouts on the horizon, an extensive shakeup is expected soon.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No movement.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Both IBF boss Shane Mosley and WBA champ Jean-Baptiste Mendy tally successful title defenses to stay at one and two, respectively.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Two-time former champion Genaro Hernandez announces his retirement and is removed. Also departing is Arnulfo Castillo, who suffered an eighth-round knockout at the hands of eighth-ranked Anatoly Alexandrov. Rejuvenated veteran John Brown and hot prospect Diego Corrales debut at ninth and 10th, respectively.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Status quo.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No alterations.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: IBF champ Johnny Tapia has switched promoters from Don King to Tony Holden, but his position among the 118-pounders doesn't change.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Even though he lost a 12-round decision to WBC kingpin In Joo Cho, Mexico's Joel Luna Zarate hangs on to the 10th spot due to the close nature of the bout.

FLYWEIGHTS: Now that longtime IBF champ Mark Johnson has moved up to junior bantam, look for THE RING's ninth ranked David Guerault (number one according to the IBF) to square off with the organization's number-two man, Irene Pacheco, for the vacant belt in the near future.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Former WBA minimumweight champion Rosendo Alvarez moves up and enters the 108-pound ranks in the second position, behind only WBC champion Saman Sorjaturong. South African Hawk Makepula is bumped from the 10th spot to make room.

STRAWWEIGHTS: With Alvarez gone, IBF titlist Zolani Petelo moves into the number-two position. Songkram Porpaoin enters at number four after winning the WBA "interim" crown with an eighth-round technical decision over Ronnie Magramo. If Ricardo Lopez is successful in his upcoming challenge of Sorjaturong at junior flyweight, he will vacate both the WBA and WBC 105-pound titles, making Porpaoin and Wandee Chor Chareon full-fledged champs.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes.

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended January 31, 1999

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

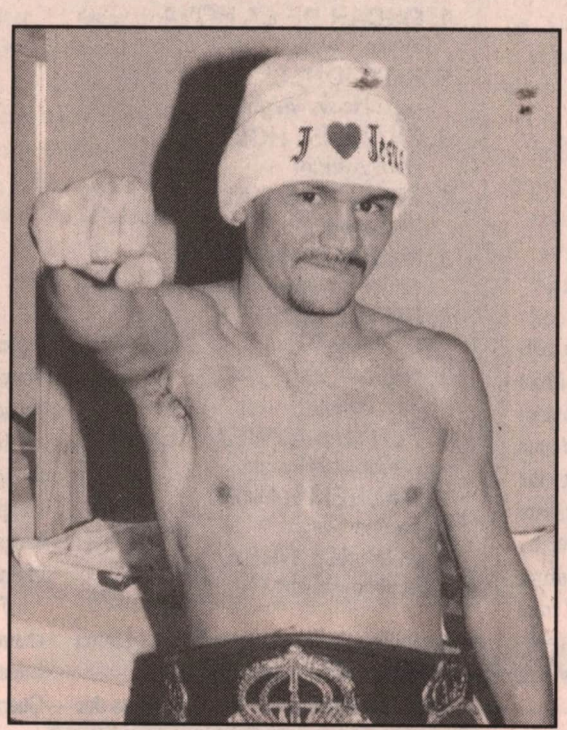
In each division, fighters are ranked according to their abilities and accomplishments.

Being champion does not necessarily mean a fighter will be rated at the top of his weight class.

These ratings reflect how the best fighters in the world rate against one another.

Ratings By The Editors

Records By Fight Fax Inc.



Former strawweight champ Rosendo Alvarez is now number two at junior fly

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

1. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD** Fairburn, GA *36-3 (WBA/IBF Champ)*
2. **LENNOX LEWIS** England *34-1 (WBC Champ)*
3. **MICHAEL GRANT** Norristown, PA *29-0*
4. **MIKE TYSON** Catskill, NY *46-3*
5. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI *26-0*
6. **IKE IBEABUCHI** Dallas, TX *19-0*
7. **DAVID TUA** Totowa, NJ *33-1*
8. **ANDREW GOLOTA** Chicago, IL *33-3*
9. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD *29-1*
10. **SHANNON BRIGGS** New York, NY *32-2*

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

1. **FABRICE TIOZZO** France *40-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **JUAN CARLOS GOMEZ** Germany *25-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **ARTHUR WILLIAMS** Las Vegas, NV *30-4-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **MARCELO DOMINGUEZ** Argentina *25-2-1*
5. **CARL THOMPSON** England *24-4*
6. **IMAMU MAYFIELD** New Brunswick, NJ *18-2*
7. **ROBERT DANIELS** Miami, FL *38-3-1*
8. **RALF ROCCHIGIANI** Germany *40-9-7*
9. **SAUL MONTANA** Mexico *32-6*
10. **KENNY KEENE** Emmett, ID *43-3*

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight limit: 175 pounds

1. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL *39-1 (WBC/WBA Champ)*
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany *39-0*
3. **REGGIE JOHNSON** Houston, TX *38-5-1 (IBF Champ)*
4. **GRACIANO ROCCHIGIANI** Germany *40-4-1*
5. **LOU DEL VALLE** Bronx, NY *28-2*
6. **ERIC HARDING** Philadephia, PA *15-0*
7. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL *32-2*
8. **MICHAEL NUNN** Davenport, IA *53-4*
9. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL *11-0*
10. **DAVID TELESCO** Port Chester, NY *20-2*

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

1. **FRANKIE LILES** N. Hollywood, CA *32-1 (WBA Champ)*
2. **JOE CALZAGHE** Wales *25-0*
3. **RICHIE WOODHALL** England *25-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **SVEN OTTKE** Germany *13-0 (IBF Champ)*
5. **CHARLES BREWER** Philadelphia, PA *32-6*
6. **THOMAS TATE** Houston, TX *36-5*
7. **ROBIN REID** England *26-1-1*
8. **VINCENZO NARDIELLO** Italy *33-6*
9. **ANDREI SCHKALIKOV** Russia *29-4-1*
10. **VINNY PAZIENZA** Cranston, RI *44-7*

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS** Philadelphia, PA *34-2-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **WILLIAM JOPPY** Washington, D.C. *26-1-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **HASSINE CHERIFI** France *26-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **KEITH HOLMES** Washington, D.C. *31-2*
5. **OTIS GRANT** Canada *31-2-1*
6. **ANTWUN ECHOLS** Davenport, IA *22-2-1*
7. **ROBERT ALLEN** Atlanta, GA *23-2*
8. **ROBERT McCRACKEN** England *32-0*
9. **RYAN RHODES** England *18-1*
10. **JULIO CESAR GREEN** Brooklyn, NY *23-3*

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

1. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
   Oxnard, CA *15-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **LAURENT BOUDOUANI**
   France *38-2-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **FRANCISCO CASTILLEJO**
   Spain *44-4 (WBC Champ)*
4. **KEITH MULLINGS**
   Brooklyn, NY *16-5-1*
5. **YORY BOY CAMPAS**
   Mexico *72-3*
6. **HARRY SIMON**
   Namibia *17-0*
7. **JULIO CESAR VASQUEZ**
   Argentina *60-3*
8. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   St. Petersburg, FL *38-2*
9. **BRONCO McKART**
   Monroe, MI *35-2*
10. **TONY MARSHALL**
    Albany, NY *30-7-6*

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Whittier, CA *29-0 (WBC Champ)*
2. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico *33-0 (IBF Champ)*
3. **IKE QUARTEY**
   Ghana *34-0-1*
4. **JAMES PAGE**
   Pittsburg, CA *23-3 (WBA Champ)*
5. **PERNELL WHITAKER**
   Norfolk, VA *41-2-1*
6. **JOSE LUIS LOPEZ**
   Mexico *42-4-2*
7. **OBA CARR**
   Detroit, MI *47-2-1*
8. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA *26-0*
9. **WILFREDO RIVERA**
   Puerto Rico *28-3-1*
10. **SHANNAN TAYLOR**
    Australia *23-0-1*

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

1. **VINCE PHILLIPS**
   Las Vegas, NV *39-3 (IBF Champ)*
2. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. *43-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Australia *22-1-1*
4. **MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *43-1-1*
5. **BOLILLO GONZALEZ**
   Mexico *48-3-1*
6. **KHALID RAHILOU**
   France *32-3*
7. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY *20-0*
8. **JULIO CESAR CHAVEZ**
   Mexico *100-3-2*
9. **REGGIE GREEN**
   Clinton, MD *28-2*
10. **GIOVANNI PARISI**
    Italy *36-3-1*

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA *31-0 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JEAN-BAPTISTE MENDY**
   France *53-7-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **CESAR BAZAN**
   Mexico *34-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO *25-1*
5. **ISRAEL CARDONA**
   Hartford, CT *30-2*
6. **ORZUBEK NAZAROV**
   Japan *26-1*
7. **IVAN ROBINSON**
   Philadelphia, PA *27-2*
8. **PHILLIP HOLIDAY**
   South Africa *34-1*
9. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ *29-4*
10. **JAMES LEIJA**
    San Antonio, TX *36-4-2*

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

1. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER JR**
   Grand Rapids, MI *18-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **TAKANORI HATAKEYAMA**
   Japan *22-0-1 (WBA Champ)*
3. **ROBERTO GARCIA**
   Oxnard, CA *32-0 (IBF Champ)*
4. **ANGEL MANFREDY**
   Gary, IN *25-3-1*
5. **YONG SOO CHOI**
   South Korea *24-3-1*
6. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Austin, TX *25-1*
7. **GOYO VARGAS**
   Mexico *38-6-1*
8. **ANATOLY ALEXANDROV**
   Kazakhstan *35-3*
9. **JOHN BROWN**
   Atlantic City, NJ *19-5*
10. **DIEGO CORRALES**
    Sacramento, CA *26-0*

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

1. **NASEEM HAMED**
   England *31-0*
2. **LUISITO ESPINOSA**
   Philippines *44-7 (WBC Champ)*
3. **FRED NORWOOD**
   St. Louis, MO *33-0-1*
4. **DERRICK GAINER**
   Pensacola, FL *27-4*
5. **ANTONIO CERMENO**
   Venezuela *32-2 (WBA Champ)*
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Mexico *27-1*
7. **MANUEL MEDINA**
   Mexico *55-10 (IBF Champ)*
8. **ANGEL VAZQUEZ**
   Hartford, CT *16-0*
9. **CESAR SOTO**
   Mexico *52-7-2*
10. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ**
    Puerto Rico *50-8-3*

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

1. **VUYANI BUNGU**
   South Africa *36-2 (IBF Champ)*
2. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico *31-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Mexico *47-2*
4. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH**
   Las Vegas, NV *22-2*
5. **NESTOR GARZA**
   Mexico *35-1 (WBA Champ)*
6. **KENNEDY McKINNEY**
   Memphis, TN *33-4-1*
7. **CARLOS BARRETO**
   Venezuela *13-0*
8. **ENRIQUE SANCHEZ**
   Mexico *24-1-1*
9. **MBULELO BOTILE**
   South Africa *23-1*
10. **DANNY ROMERO**
    Albuquerque, NM *33-3*

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

1. **TIM AUSTIN**
   Cincinnati, OH *18-0-1 (IBF Champ)*
2. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
   Albuquerque, NM *45-0-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **VEERAPHOL SAHAPROM**
   Thailand *21-1 (WBC Champ)*
4. **JORGE ELIECER JULIO**
   Colombia *40-1*
5. **NANA KONADU**
   Ghana *39-4*
6. **JOICHIRO TATSUYOSHI**
   Japan *17-5-1*
7. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSUK**
   Thailand *16-1*
8. **PAULIE AYALA**
   Ft. Worth, TX *25-1*
9. **DAORUNG C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *61-6-3*
10. **ADAN VARGAS**
    Mexico *29-1-1*

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

1. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. *36-1*
2. **IN JOO CHO**
   South Korea *14-0 (WBC Champ)*
3. **JESUS ROJAS**
   Venezuela *32-7-2 (WBA Champ)*
4. **GERRY PENALOSA**
   Philippines *39-1-2*
5. **SATOSHI IIDA**
   Japan *25-1-1*
6. **YOKTHAI SITHOAR**
   Thailand *14-1-1*
7. **HAROLD GREY**
   Colombia *22-2*
8. **LUIS BOLANO**
   Colombia *23-0*
9. **RATANACHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *27-3*
10. **JOEL LUNA ZARATE**
    Mexico *32-3-2*

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines *24-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **HUGO SOTO**
   Argentina *50-5-2 (WBA Champ)*
3. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia *20-0*
4. **CHATCHAI DUTCHBOY GYM**
   Thailand *33-2*
5. **JOSE BONILLA**
   Venezuela *24-5*
6. **SAEN SOR PLOENCHIT**
   Thailand *29-1*
7. **ALEJANDRO MONTIEL**
   Mexico *37-3*
8. **RUBEN SANCHEZ-LEON**
   Mexico *23-7-1*
9. **DAVID GUERAULT**
   France *14-0*
10. **CHOKVIWAT CHOKCHAI**
    Thailand *30-3*

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

1. **SAMAN SORJATURONG**
   Thailand *39-2-1 (WBC Champ)*
2. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua *24-1-1*
3. **PICHITNOI C. SIRIWAT**
   Thailand *20-1 (WBA Champ)*
4. **BABY JAKE MATLALA**
   South Africa *50-10-2*
5. **WILL GRIGSBY**
   St. Paul, MN *13-1-1 (IBF Champ)*
6. **JUAN CORDOBA**
   Argentina *32-4-3*
7. **MELCHOR COB CASTRO**
   Mexico *52-5-4*
8. **JOMA GAMBOA**
   Philippines *25-3-1*
9. **OSVALDO GUERRERO**
   Mexico *24-3*
10. **YEOSAM CHOI**
    South Korea *18-1*

STRAWWEIGHT
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

1. **RICARDO LOPEZ**
   Mexico *47-0-1 (WBC/WBA Champ)*
2. **ZOLANI PETELO**
   South Africa *13-2-2 (IBF Champ)*
3. **WANDEE CHOR CHAREON**
   Thailand *22-3*
4. **SONGKRAM PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *20-1-1*
5. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand *38-1*
6. **ROCKY LIN**
   Philippines *26-2*
7. **ALA VILLAMOR**
   Philippines *29-2-1*
8. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico *19-1-1*
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Columbia *30-2*
10. **EDGAR CARDENAS**
    Mexico *24-6-1*

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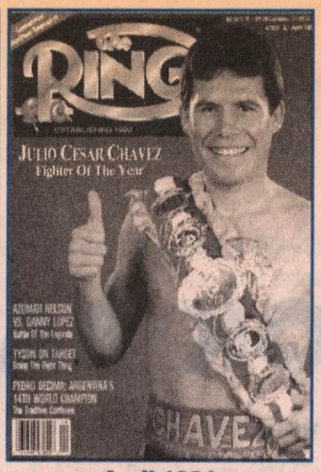

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Holiday 1998 (92-Page Special): A War Worthy Of An Encore: Why Gatti & Robinson Have To Do It Again! Plus: Kostya Tszyu, Israel Cardona, Mills Lane, 50 greatest heavyweights.

Jan. 1999: Sugar Shane Mosley: The Sweet Tradition Continues. Plus: Evander Holyfield, Julio Cesar Chavez, Erik Morales, Ray "Windmill" White.

Feb. 1999: 1999! It's Gonna Be A Great Year For Boxing. Plus: Mike Tyson, Foreman-Holmes, David Reid, Eric Morel, Richie Mitchell, quitters.

March 1999: De La Hoya vs. Quartey: Does Bazooka Have The Weapons To Shoot Down Oscar? Plus: Sugar Shane Mosley, Lopez-Alvarez II, Roy Jones, Coley Wallace.

April 1999 (92-Page Special): Fighter Of The Year: Floyd Mayweather Jr.: "He's So Good, It's Scary!" Plus: Fernando Vargas, James Page, Luisito Espinosa, Robinson-Gatti II, Archie Moore, Carlos Oritz, 1998 diary.

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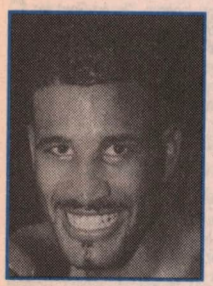
NEW FACES

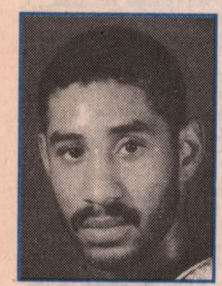
A LOOK BACK

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

What have our most recent "New Faces" been doing since being featured in THE RING? An update:

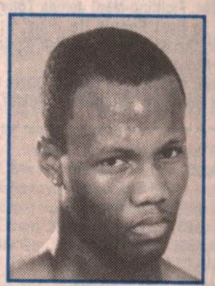


Eric Morel, flyweight (December 1997 issue): The former Olympian was ranked third at junior bantam in the IBF's December ratings, and appears to be championship material. He has been extremely active, fighting nine times since appearing in THE RING. Morel's biggest achievement was a sixth-round knockout of Colombian veteran Rodolfo Blanco in September of '98. **Record: 18-0 (13).**

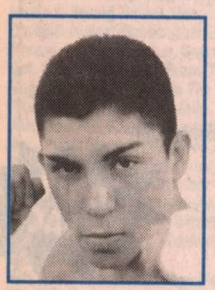


Don Diego Poeder, cruiserweight (Holiday 1997 issue): The exciting Poeder was breezing along until he met veteran Robert Daniels last May and suffered a devastating 10th-round knockout loss. In what was supposed to be a relatively easy comeback bout in January, Poeder's weak chin was exposed again when Sajad Abdul Aziz kayoed him in three rounds. **Record: 21-2 (15).**

Diego Corrales, junior lightweight (January 1998 issue): The six-foot-tall Corrales seems ready to make an impact in 1999. He finished '98 in impressive style, handing Gary St. Clair his first defeat with a unanimous decision win in December, and is now the top contender to Roberto Garcia's IBF title. **Record: 26-0 (21).**

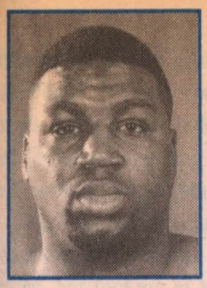


Zab Judah, junior welterweight (February 1998 issue): Judah has the best chance to be the first world champion of this bunch. He is hoping to get a shot at IBF junior welterweight champion Vince Phillips sometime this year, or, as interim champ, will claim the title if Phillips moves up in weight. Meanwhile, Judah has scored meaningful wins over veterans Mickey Ward and Darryl Tyson, and won by fourth-round knockout over Wilfredo Negron on the Mike Tyson-Frans Botha undercard in January. **Record: 19-0 (14) with 1 no-contest.**

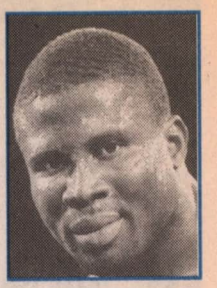


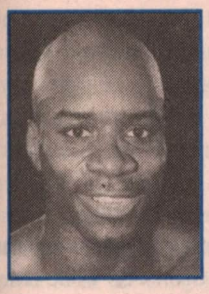
Pedro Pena, junior bantamweight (March 1998 issue): Pena, who is moving quicker than his handlers expected, beat Sam Stewart in a 12-rounder in September. Pena, 20, is still young, and is ranked number four by the IBF. Manager Tom Loeffler is looking to book him into a title shot by the end of this year. **Record: 14-0 (7).**

Robbie Peden, junior lightweight (April 1998 issue): Peden had an active '98, though he has not increased his competition level. The former Olympian from Australia beat Leroy Brown (W 4) in February, Eugene Johnson (KO 2) in March, Vincent Bob (KO 2) in September, and finished the year taking out Solomone Catarago (KO 1) in November. He was hampered by a rotator cuff injury for part of the year. **Record: 11-0 (7).**

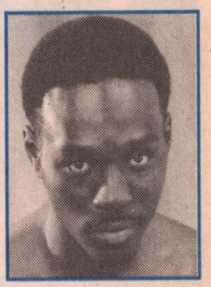


Lawrence Clay-Bey, heavyweight (May 1998 issue): The '96 U.S. Olympian has shown some promise, but has been plagued by a broken bone in his right hand. He's looking to return to action in the spring. Clay-Bey last fought in April '98, scoring a second-round knockout of Abdul Sazem Muhaymin. **Record: 9-0 (8).**

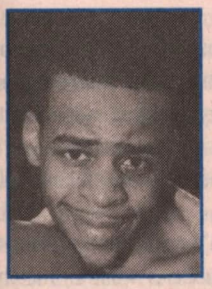




Duncan Dokiwari, heavyweight (June 1998 issue): The physically imposing Nigerian is still being relegated to four- and six-round fights by his promoter, America Presents. Dokiwari was taken the distance for the first time in winning a four-round decision against journeyman Miguel Otero in December. Dokiwari was cruising along, until he lost a six-round decision to undefeated Fres Oquendo on the Tyson-Botha undercard in January. **Record: 12-1 (11).**



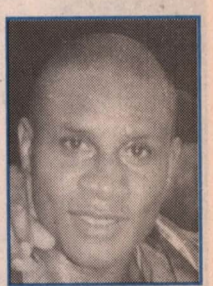
Glenn Robinson, light heavyweight (July 1998 issue): The lanky New Yorker may still be about two years away from being considered a title contender. The athletic Robinson finished '98 with a disappointing eight-round draw against Ray Berry. It was the first time Robinson ever fought beyond four rounds. **Record: 9-0-1 (7).**



Kenny Bowman, light heavyweight (August 1998 issue): Since we last checked in with Bowman, he suffered a dubious second-round knockout loss to undefeated Derrick Harmon in June. He was set to return in January, but instead found himself back in jail for violating his parole. **Record: 30-1 (21).**

Zahir Raheem, featherweight (September 1998 issue): The '96 Olympic bantamweight has shown he has ability, but his competition level remains low. His most recent fight was a six-round decision win over mediocre Pasqual Rouse in January. Raheem needs to upgrade his opposition in what could be a pivotal year in his progress. **Record: 13-0 (6).**

Troy Browning, welterweight (October 1998 issue): Browning fought just twice in '98, beating Roger Brown (W 6) in March and Benji Singleton (W 6) in September. At press time, Brown was scheduled to fight on the undercard of the Reggie Johnson-Will Taylor IBF light heavyweight championship fight in February. Manager Rob Murray wants to make a move with Browning this year and hopefully be in title contention by the end of '99. **Record: 17-0-1 (8).**



Paul Spadafora, lightweight (November 1998 issue): The smooth-boxing Pittsburgh southpaw continued to fight in small venues with good results. He won a bloody 10-round war over veteran Dezi Ford in December, then followed that up with a unamimous decision win over tough Rocky Martinez in January on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. **Record: 24-0 (13).**

Daniel Attah, lightweight (December 1998 issue): The pious Nigerian could become a top-10 contender this year if he continues to progress. He took some time off to attend minister school after winning a six-round decision from Cuban Hicklett Lau on a Fox SportsNet show in late-October and beating Juan Suarez by unanimous decision in his first eight-round bout on September 4. **Record: 10-0 (5).**

Syd Vanderpool, middleweight (Holiday 1998 issue): Vanderpool's motivation has been questioned before, and his recent inactivity is raising uncertainty again. As of press time, Vanderpool's last fight, his most impressive to date, was a 12-round decision over veteran Lonny Beasley last June. There was talk of a fight early in '99 with highly regarded Joe Calzaghe, but nothing has come of it yet. **Record: 24-1 (15).** ■

RYAN OUT LOUD

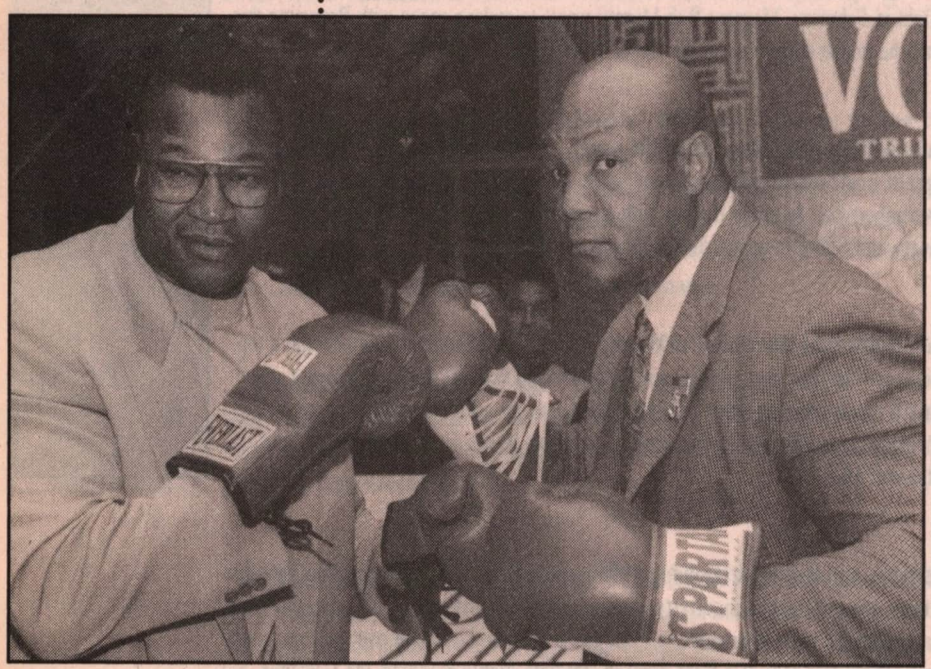
By Jeff Ryan

NOT ALONE WITH MY THOUGHTS

Apparently, the boxing public has grown tired of its mandatory-defense obligations and has decided to abdicate the title of Most Gullible Fans in Professional Sports. So while baseball and basketball junkies battle it out for the vacant crown (with tennis rooters promised the first shot at the winner), the suddenly discriminating fight fan will henceforth sit back with a smug smile on his face, proud that he no longer serves as the prime example of a fool eager to be parted from his money.

All right, so perhaps I'm getting a little carried away here. Maybe boxing will never be one of the first places—or first hundred places—anyone looks to find savvy consumers. But following the public's Dikembe Motumbo-like rejection of the George Foreman-Larry Holmes stuporfight, there's hope for the future. After all, it's hard to remember the last time a promoter peddling a fistic sideshow was told to rip down his sign, pack up his megaphone, and beat it, lest someone call the Better Business Bureau.

The cancellation of Foreman-Holmes will be blamed on the promotion's cash flow problems, an inability to deliver letters of credit, etc. But a lack of interest by the public is what ultimately made this ripoff unravel. A few weeks before the scheduled fight night at Houston's Astrodome, fewer than 5,000 seats had been sold. (Do you know what 5,000 people in a 60,000-seat stadium would have looked like? Like a smattering of freckles on Rosie O'Donnell's back.) And when the astronomers grabbed their telescopes and gazed into the pay-per-view universe, they saw no signs of life.



Ryan says good riddance to Holmes-Foreman

Despite rumblings that they are still attempting to make the fight happen, here's hoping that the thumbs down given to Foreman-Holmes is final. Here's also hoping that it's not an aberration, but is the first of many messages delivered by a public that has waited too long for great matchups and is tired of having its intelligence insulted by carnival barkers and snake oil salesmen. The saying, "One man's junk is another man's treasure," doesn't have to apply to the Sweet Science. One man's junk should be just that—*one man's* junk. And let *him* hang on to it until the red ink rolls over him like a tidal wave.

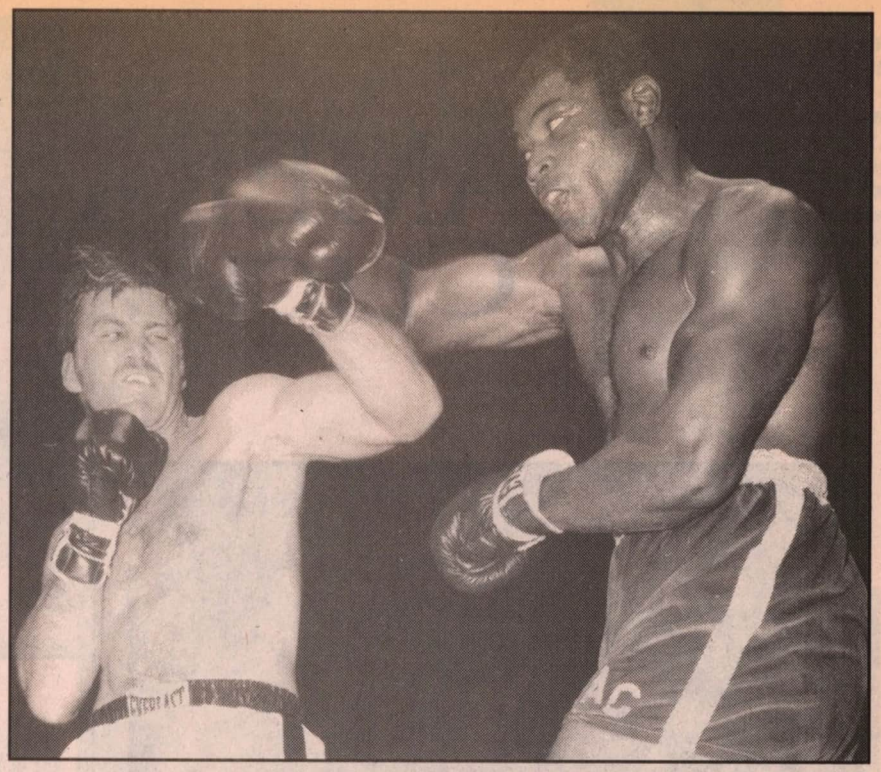
***

"Irish" Jerry Quarry had retired long before my arrival on the beat, so my only encounter with him

came in the mid-'80s in a hotel gift shop in Las Vegas. It was a moment that's hard to forget. Quarry was holding a glass of beer and literally staggering around like a drunk in a cartoon. It was about 9 a.m.

This was a few years before the serious neurological problems would reveal themselves, but looking at him that day on The Strip, one couldn't help but sense that Quarry was on his way to becoming another one of boxing's many tragic endings. Eventually, he'd be diagnosed with dementia, the result of too much punishment absorbed in the ring, and he'd have to be cared for by relatives. The inevitable sad ending finally came on January 3, when Quarry's family removed the brain-damaged fighter from life-support equipment and he died at the age of 53.

So how will the historians treat Quarry? If they're fair, they'll treat him well. Having watched him on television and on film while growing up, I'd rate him as the best white heavyweight since Rocky Marciano. Granted, the division hasn't been chock full of Caucasian clock-cleaners in the past half-century, but the list does include an undisputed champion, Ingemar Johansson, a WBA titlist, Gerrie Coetzee, an IBF champ, Frans Botha, and a number of good, albeit flawed, fighters: Joe Bugner, George Chuvalo, Duane Bobick, Gerry Cooney, Tommy Morrison, and Andrew Golota. Quarry lost to Chuvalo, but would have beaten the rest.



Quarry en route to handing Mac Foster his first defeat

Quarry was a talented boxer-puncher, a combination that's rare in white heavyweights. He hit hard enough to be the one left standing after a one-round slugfest with Earnie Shavers, one of the most feared bombers of all-time. And Quarry boxed well enough to outpoint then-undefeated and highly touted Mac Foster. He was also tough enough to have handed banger Ron Lyle his first defeat, wobbling him badly along the way. Unfortunately for Quarry, he wasn't skilled enough to rise to the upper echelon. Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier each stopped him twice, and Ken Norton left him sliced and diced.

Quarry reminded me of Vitas Gerulaitis, the late tennis star. Had he come along a few years later, Gerulaitis would have collected Grand Slam titles like they were practice balls. But he was never able to climb to that next level because three guys named Borg, Connors, and McEnroe stood in his way.

There's no question Quarry would have been a champion in today's era of splintered titles, and he'd make more money in a single title defense than the $2.1-million he reportedly earned for his entire career. In his prime, he would have given Holmes a better battle than Cooney did, and if he had Riddick Bowe in trouble in two separate bouts, he wouldn't have been stupid enough to get himself disqualified.

If, if, if. It's a word Quarry probably recited many times.

"If only I could have fought in the '80s or '90s ... "

"If only I could have gotten a shot at Tony Tubbs or Greg Page ... "

If only the blows to the head had affected him as mildly years later as they did Archie Moore and Jake LaMotta, rather than as cruelly as they did Muhammad Ali and Wilfred Benitez ...

***

You won't find me shooting out the tires on the feel-good bandwagon, but I'm not ready to jump aboard with all the cheerleaders just yet, either. Sure, 1999 holds out some promise of being a good year for the Sweet Science, but so did '97 and '98. Evander Holyfield vs. Lennox Lewis is a good start to the campaign. Let's hope it's not a case of there's no where else to go but down.

Before your columnist gets worked into the state of euphoria that's sweeping up much of the boxing press, he wants to see lots of competitive fights, more than just one or two marquee matchups come to fruition, Michael Grant prove he's all that he's hyped to be, and Mike Tyson follow the Botha bout with big-name showdowns rather than spend the entire year cashing hefty checks for tuneups.

Roy Jones and Shane Mosley call themselves superstars, but they won't deserve the designation unless they upgrade their opposition in '99. (That means Dariusz Michalczewski or Bernard Hopkins for Jones, and Floyd Mayweather Jr. for Mosley.) Prove to me, Bob Arum, that you'll resist the temptation to take De La Hoya to El Paso and sell another 50,000 tickets for a mismatch, and will instead make a Felix Trinidad fight. Show me, Fernando Vargas, that you're on top to stay, and show me, Naseem Hamed, that you can beat someone who's not either washed-up or moving up.

Whatever bit of optimism resides in *me* for '99 is tempered with caution. As for all you bandwagon riders, just make sure your tires are properly inflated. After 1998, the last thing we need is more blowouts. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

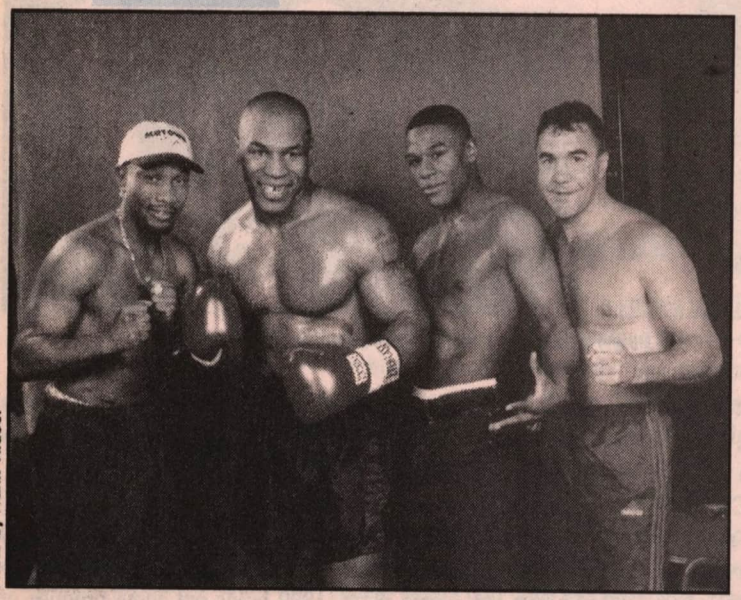


Photo by Frank Vitucci

It was supposed to be Mike Tyson's photo shoot, but a few other champions past and present snuck into this shot. Four-division former champ Pernell Whitaker, WBC 130-pound titlist Floyd Mayweather Jr., and former WBC feather king Jeff Fenech all came to wish Iron Mike luck before his fight with Frans Botha. And the ambitious Mayweather, not surprisingly, challenged all the other three to take him on.

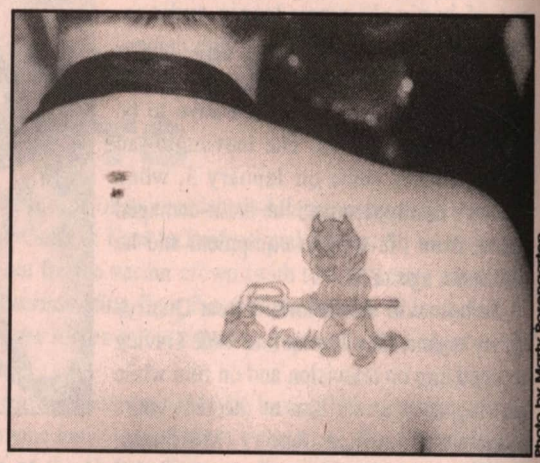


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

A love of devilish tattoos must run in the Manfredy family, as Angel's wife, Yvette, showed off her own little "El Diablo" branding at her husband's fight with Floyd Mayweather Jr. in Miami. Unfortunately, it was Angel who got tattooed once the fight started, suffering a second-round TKO loss to Mayweather.

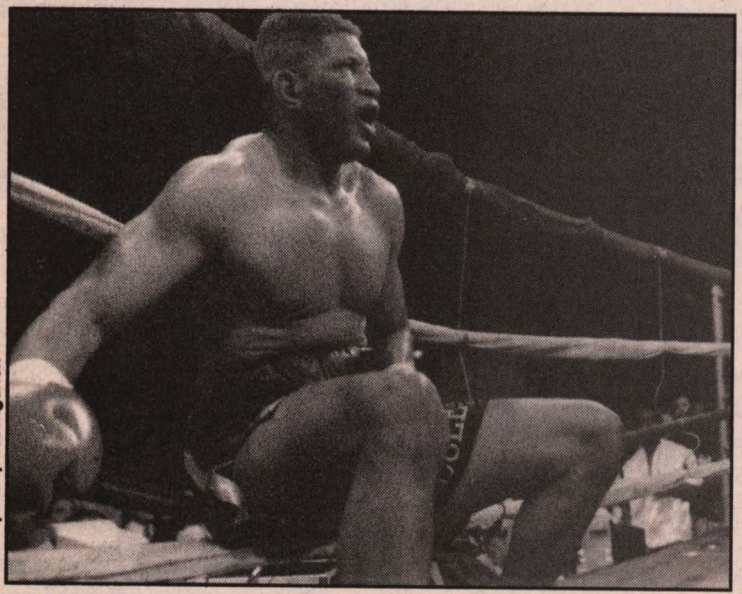


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Al Cole needed a place to sit and catch his breath after absorbing repeated low blows from Kirk Johnson in their heavyweight battle last December. Cole's nickname is "Ice," and that's exactly what the suddenly soprano former cruiserweight champ was looking for to keep the swelling down.

Photo by Tom Casino/Showtime

Teresa Tapia had herself all dolled up for her husband Johnny's December fight against Nana Konadu, but she needs to learn how to accessorize better. Rubber gloves with an evening gown? And that big, clumsy white towel? Mr. Blackwell would be very disappointed.

Photo by Teddy Blackburn

Madison Square Garden paid tribute to its former president Harry Markson recently, following Markson's death at the age of 92 last November. Markson was involved in promoting more than 2,000 fights at the Garden, including the first fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier in 1971.

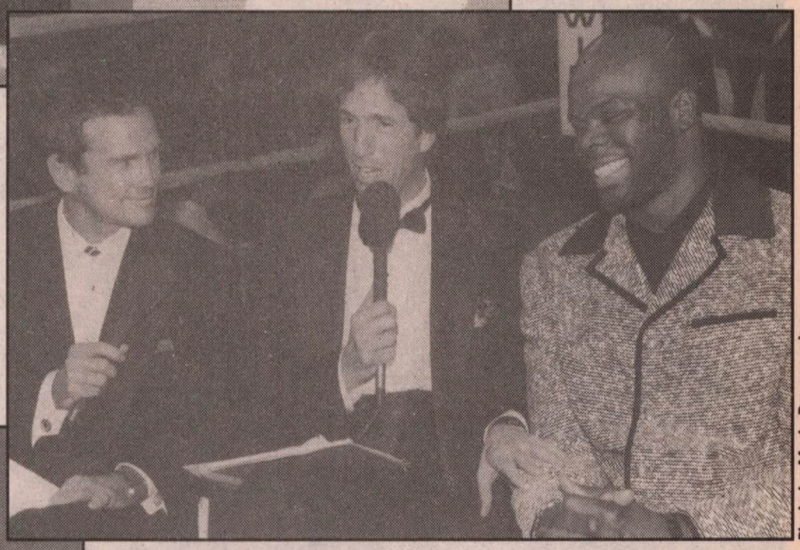


Photo by Marty Rosengarten

"Sean, I'm sick of you bullying me around in the broadcast booth, so I've added a personal bodyguard to the announcing team." Heavyweight contender Michael Grant seemed happy to watch Al Albert's back during their December pay-per-view telecast from the Roseland Ballroom in New York City, and O'Grady didn't appear too eager to prove who the real "Champ" was.

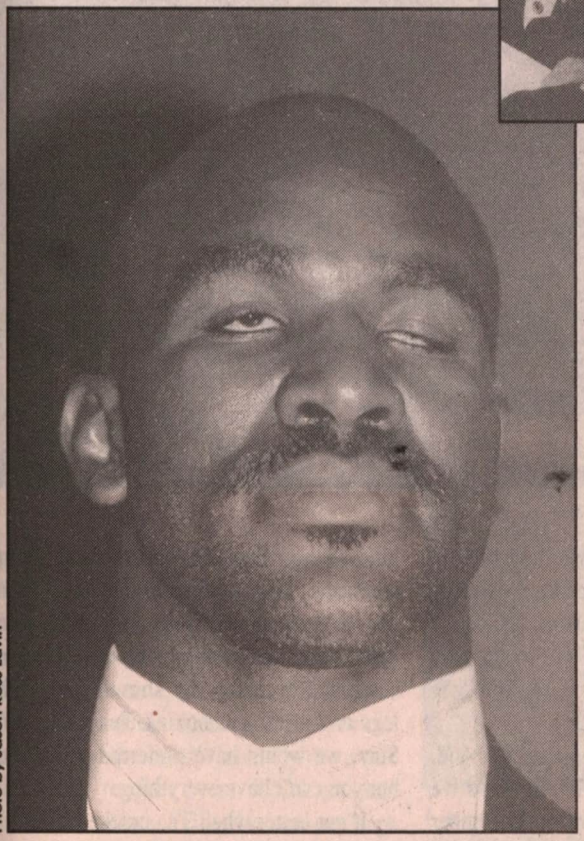


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

It's Dr. Vanderstein's most frightening creation! If ever there's been a more unattractive picture of three-time heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield, we haven't seen it.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Heavyweight champ Rocky Marciano was sick of being the only one at the Country Club with a screwed up nose, so he found a poor sucker willing to lay his proboscis on the line while "The Rock" worked on his golf game. Our understanding is that Marciano clipped the guy with the club, but showed proper etiquette by replacing his divot.

Safety vs. Common Sense:

ARE THEY STOPPING FIGHTS TOO SOON?

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

The controversial terminations of the David Tua-Hasim Rahman and Floyd Mayweather Jr.-Angel Manfredy (opposite page) bouts have both fans and industry insiders asking if too many fights are stopped too soon.

By William Dettloff

For fight fans, Christmas was coming early. David Tua and Hasim Rahman, two burly, highly rated, evenly matched, young behemoths were meeting to decide which one would get to face the survivor of the Evander Holyfield-Lennox Lewis meeting in March. After that, new WBC super featherweight stud Floyd Mayweather was taking on the division's hottest contender, Angel Manfredy. And in case you couldn't make it down to Miami to see the card in person, you didn't have to shell out $30 or $40 to watch it on pay-per-view; HBO was bringing it to you live.

It was the kind of card we needed and, after a largely dreadful 1998, the kind we deserved. So we settled back on December 19 for what we expected and hoped would be a night of high-caliber fisticuffs, the kind we hear those old-timers go on about when they're reminiscing over Marciano and Robinson and Zale and Louis. We didn't even mind that much when Rahman surprised everyone by showing up with legs and a jab and boxing Tua's ears off. Sure, we would have preferred a slugfest, but you can't have everything.

It got better when Tua cracked Rahman with a hook after the bell ending the ninth round, and "The Rock," who was light years ahead in the scoring, teetered back to his corner. It got even better when Tua pounced on him early in the 10th, trapped him on the ropes, and started hammering away. But then a curious thing happened: As Rahman ducked here and there while squatting on the middle strand of the ropes and taking roughly every third haymaker Tua tried, referee Tellis Assimenios leapt between the two and stopped it.

"I believe that is a very bad stoppage!" HBO's Larry Merchant all but screamed from ringside.

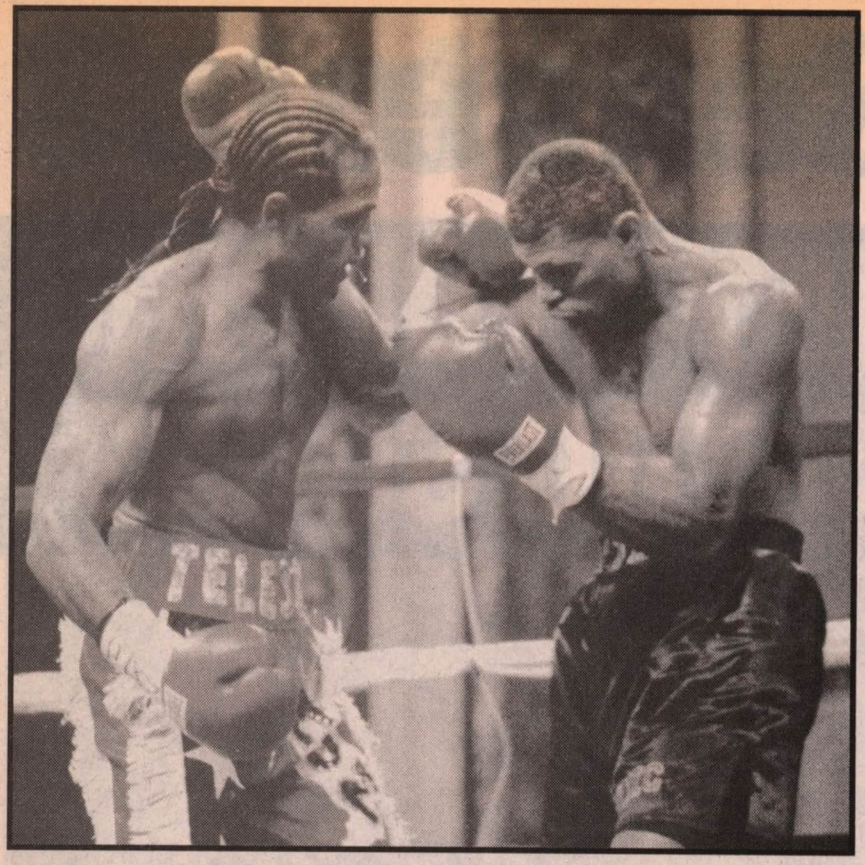
"He missed four shots in a row and they stopped the fight," an apparently lucid Rahman said minutes afterward. "I was still defending myself."

They were both right.

About 10 minutes later, Mayweather sent Manfredy stumbling into the same section of ropes and then opened up. "El Diablo" took about a half-dozen clean

I want my mommy. Manfredy cried—literally—that he'd been given a raw deal when his fight with Mayweather was stopped in the second round.

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO



Is it an epidemic? When rising contender David Telesco stunned ex-champ Frank Tate in the fourth round and then opened up with a volley of shots along the ropes, the fight was quickly stopped without giving Tate much of a chance to fight back.

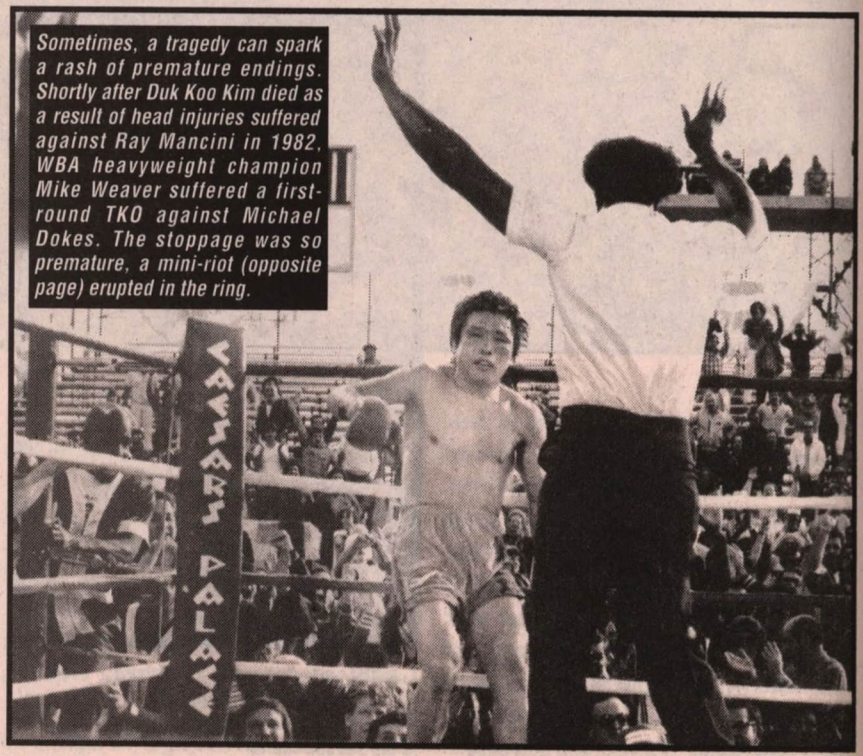
shots while flopping around like a seagull caught in a windstorm. He was hurt and it showed, but before anyone could find out if he had the same kind of stuff in him that Marciano, Zale, Robinson, and Louis did, referee Frank Santore called it off. Like Rahman, Manfredy screamed and yelled and protested—only he had to wait until his head cleared—the way fighters do when they lose a big fight that way.

"It was all politics, it was all rigged up for him to win," he cried. A lot of people couldn't blame him, even if his rationale was goofy, and even if Manfredy's case wasn't as strong as Rahman's, which it wasn't. That's because a lot of people think these two fights were another example of what's gone wrong with the fight game. Another trend, like the proliferation of sanctioning bodies and weight classes. They've cheapened the sport, watered it down. You can add quick stoppages to standing eight-counts and greedy promoters, they'll say, and they'll point to Rahman and Manfredy as proof that things just aren't the way they ought to be.

If you're a purist, you want a definitive ending. You want to know at the end who the better man is, just like at the end of a football game, you want to look at the scoreboard and see the end of the story. Premature stoppages rob us of an ending.

It's as though an officiating crew has trotted out onto the field at the end of the third quarter and announced that since the losing team is down by two touchdowns and their starting quarterback is injured, they've decided to end the game and award it to the winning team. Or with a half-hour left in the movie, the director comes on and says he couldn't decide how to conclude so he's just going to run the credits. No clear ending. That smarts, and a lot of folks say it's happening so much that it's ruining the game.

If you're inclined toward that way of thinking, you'll have little trouble finding examples that support your point of view, looking at even relatively recent results. There are plenty to choose from. Last August, current IBF junior middleweight champion Fernando Vargas tuned up for his challenge of then-champion Yory Boy Campas by taking on tough journeyman Darren Maciunski. Vargas had his way until a cut opened over his left eye. In danger of having the fight stopped, he tore into Maciunski, who initially hung right with him. But late in the sixth, Vargas trapped Maciunski on the ropes and was teeing off when referee James Condon stopped it. What's wrong with that, you ask? There were five seconds left in the round and although he was clearly on the losing end, Maciunski wasn't badly hurt and was still



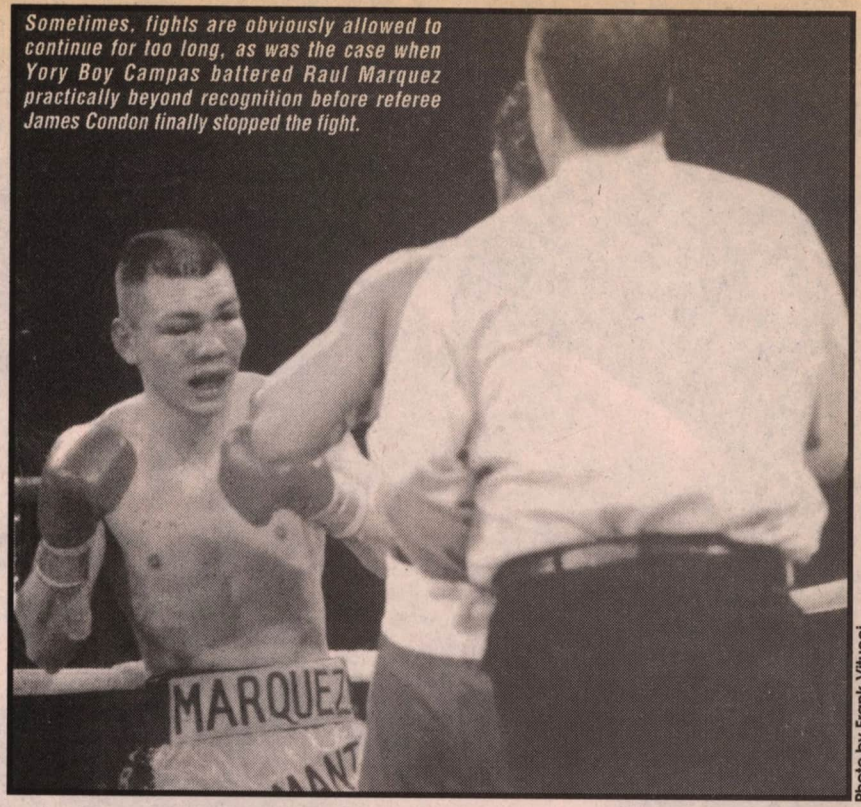
Sometimes, a tragedy can spark a rash of premature endings. Shortly after Duk Koo Kim died as a result of head injuries suffered against Ray Mancini in 1982, WBA heavyweight champion Mike Weaver suffered a first-round TKO against Michael Dokes. The stoppage was so premature, a mini-riot (opposite page) erupted in the ring.

in it because of Vargas' cut. What might have happened had there been a round seven?

In October, hard-punching light heavyweight David Telesco met veteran Frank Tate, a former champion with over 40 fights. In the fourth round, Telesco caught Tate and staggered him with a volley of blows. Referee James Santa gave Tate a standing eight-count, decided he didn't like the way he looked, and waved it over. Tate hadn't gone down and looked to most in attendance to be perfectly capable of continuing.

In November, former WBC lightweight champion Stevie Johnston made his first appearance since his loss to Cesar Bazan by taking on Demetrio Ceballos. After outboxing Ceballos early, Johnston turned up the heat in the sixth, trapping Ceballos on the ropes and staggering him with a right hook. A followup assault wobbled Ceballos again, but at no time did he fall or appear defenseless. Referee Mitch Halpern immediately intervened.

One week after the Johnston-Ceballos fight, Davey Hilton scored a 12th-round technical knockout of Stephane Ouellet with just 18 seconds left in the fight. Ouellet was never floored in the bout and suffered nothing worse than a bloody nose. The referee, Denis Langlois, could have given him a standing eight-count, but chose instead to stop it when Ouellet reeled into a corner following a barrage from Hilton.



Sometimes, fights are obviously allowed to continue for too long, as was the case when Yory Boy Campas battered Raul Marquez practically beyond recognition before referee James Condon finally stopped the fight.

Photo by Frank Vitucci

You don't have to work hard to recall other controversial stoppages from over the years: Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor I still eats at some to this day; Mike Tyson-Razor Ruddock I, too. (Richard Steele, who worked both bouts, is still booed whenever he works a fight.) Tommy Morrison's win over Ruddock as well.

"There's no question that fights are being stopped too quickly," said Hall of Fame trainer Gil Clancy. "This is professional boxing. These guys are getting paid

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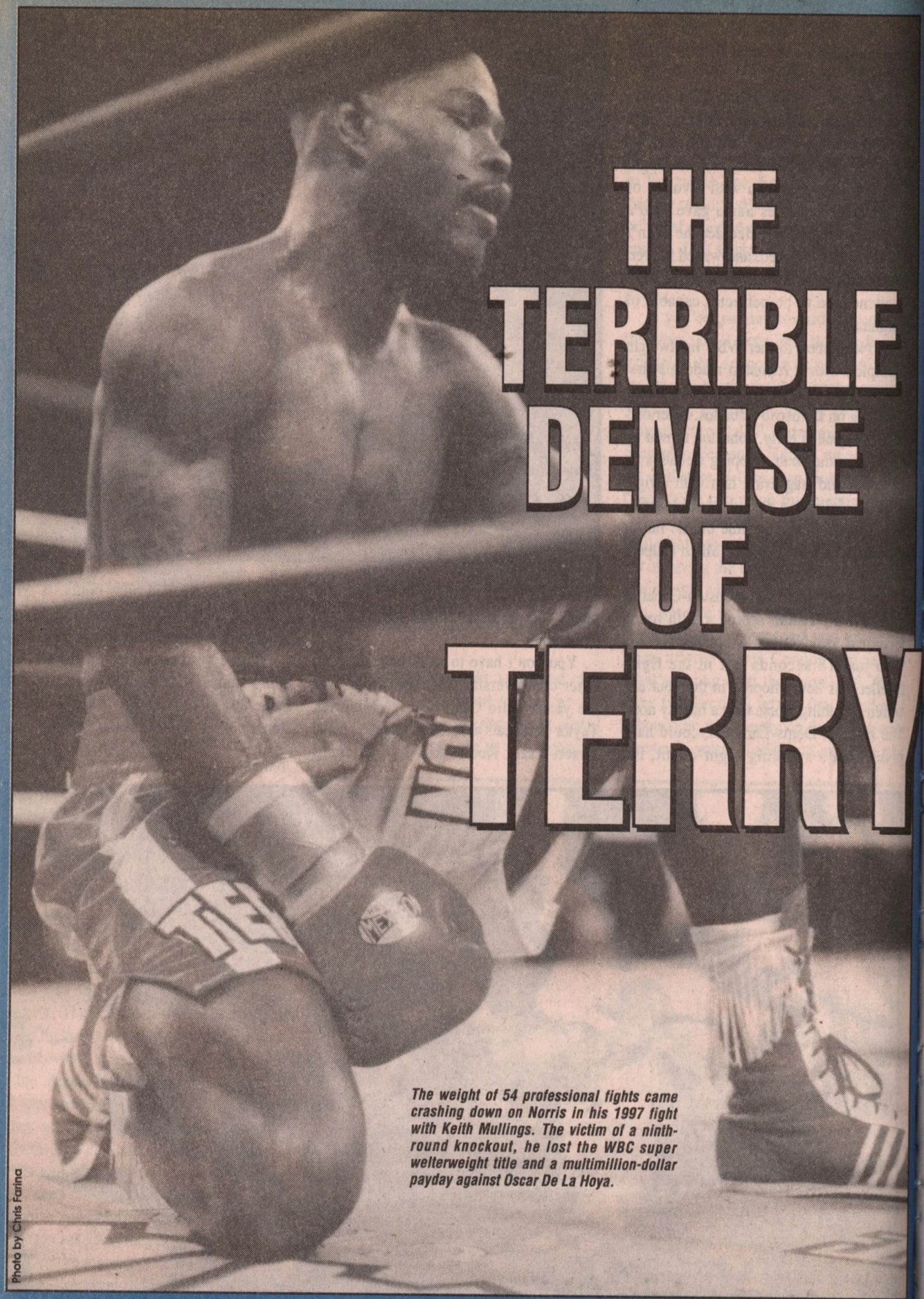
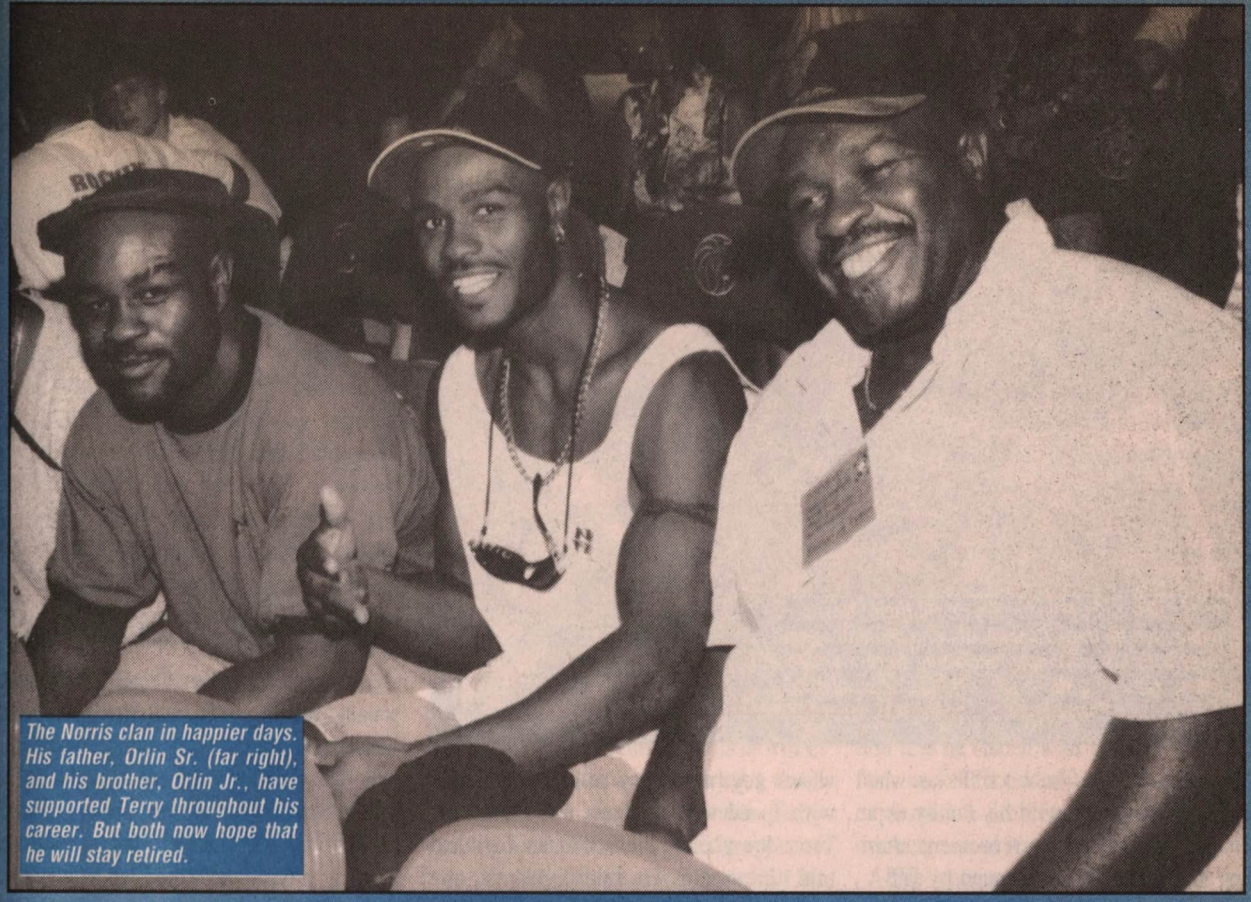
THE TERRIBLE DEMISE OF TERRY



The weight of 54 professional fights came crashing down on Norris in his 1997 fight with Keith Mullings. The victim of a ninth-round knockout, he lost the WBC super welterweight title and a multimillion-dollar payday against Oscar De La Hoya.

Photo by Chris Farina



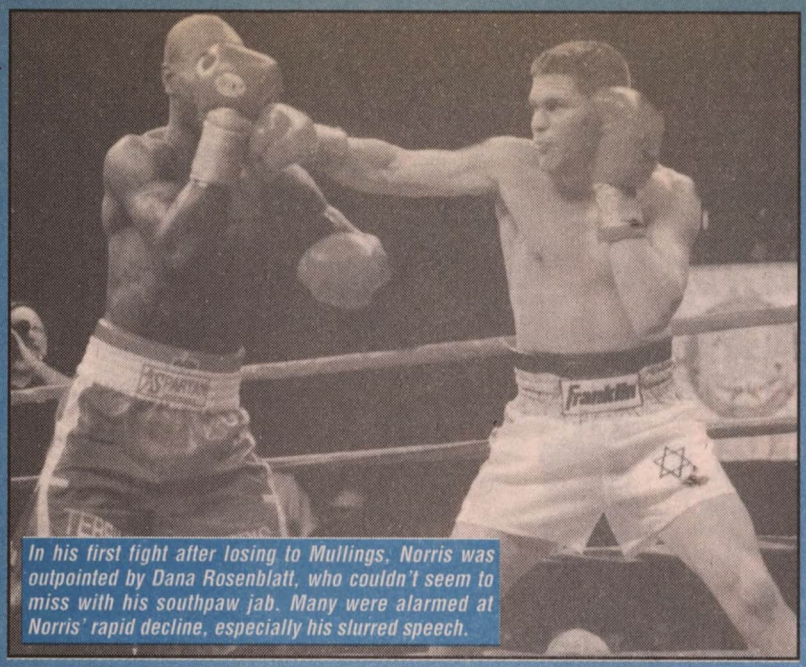
The Norris clan in happier days. His father, Orlin Sr. (far right), and his brother, Orlin Jr., have supported Terry throughout his career. But both now hope that he will stay retired.

NORRIS

"He Was Like A Candle Wick That Just Burned Out"

By Robert Mladinich

The adage about time standing still for nobody is never more apparent than in the tenuous careers of boxing champions. So often their once seemingly ageless skills erode overnight, although they are frequently hoodwinked by their own indomitable will and false sense of invincibility. Because three-time former junior middleweight champion Terry Norris enjoyed such a long run at the top, his meteoric fall from grace after three straight losses was especially sad to see. What makes it all the more startling is the fact that just a little over a year ago he was given a legitimate chance of upsetting Oscar De La Hoya, and earning a career-high $4.5-million in the process. Suddenly, it was as if he was playing Russian Roulette with his senses, and losing.



In his first fight after losing to Mullings, Norris was outpointed by Dana Rosenblatt, who couldn't seem to miss with his southpaw jab. Many were alarmed at Norris' rapid decline, especially his slurred speech.

Norris, a native of Lubbock, Texas, who moved to San Diego with his family as a teenager, announced his retirement after being stopped in the ninth round by WBA super welterweight champion Laurent Boudouani in Paris on November 30. Since taking a dreadful beating and losing his WBC title to then-unheralded Keith Mullings in December '97, Norris' once gazelle-like balance and swift, deft movement had all but vanished. Without any real balance, his once-vaunted power seemed to go by the wayside as well. Whether or not the 31-year-old Norris stays retired is another story, but those closest to him insist they are glad to see him leave the game that has brought him both his best and worst of times. They found it too difficult to watch the once-magnificently skilled warrior reduced to a teetering, tottering, and slurring shadow of his former self.

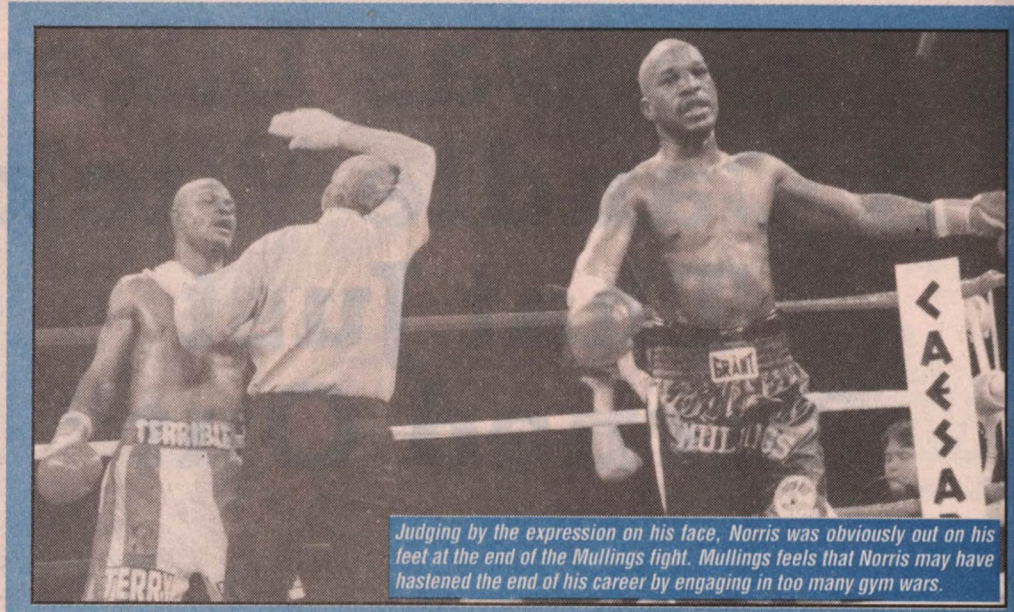
"Terry lost his legs and his balance, and those are key things for a fighter to have," said his brother Orlin Norris Jr., a former WBA cruiserweight champion and active heavyweight contender. "The power is always the last thing to go. You can still whack guys out if you're lucky, but guys with speed will beat you up. We all sat Terry down before the Boudouani fight and told him to stop. He said he wanted one more fight to settle all the questions in his mind. So we stood by him, but said we would make sure he didn't get hurt."

The fight with Boudouani came only nine weeks after a tough decision loss to full-fledged middleweight contender Dana Rosenblatt. It was in that bout, his first since the shellacking by Mullings, that many ringsiders and television viewers were aghast at what they saw. From the opening bell, Norris was eating one right jab after another from his left-handed rival. More compelling was the way he plodded forward on shaky legs, his body completely devoid of any semblance of balance. He did manage to come on strongly in the final four rounds, as a visibly exhausted Rosenblatt held him incessantly. The holding provided fodder for co-managers Scott S. Woodworth and Michael Marley to launch into a diatribe at the postfight press conference. They claimed referee Steve Smoger was remiss for not penalizing Rosenblatt and demanded a rematch. All the while, Norris sat at a small table, his head buried in his hands. When it was his time to speak, the words were barely audible and hardly coherent. "If the ref didn't let him hold so much, I would have gotten to him," he mumbled.

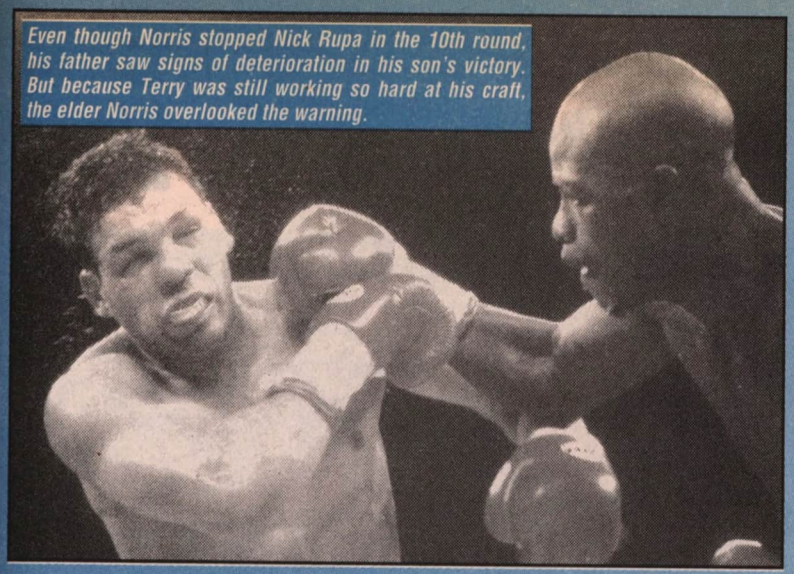
"I was not all that effective in the later rounds," admitted Rosenblatt, who became dehydrated in the eighth round. "But I still beat Terry handily for most of the fight. Throughout his career, Terry never showed he could take a great shot, but he had such a potent offense, he would hit guys with a succession of punches and see them on the floor. He couldn't hurt me with anything, even after I got drained by the dehydration. I was surprised at that. I can take a better punch than most people think I can, but he just couldn't hurt me at all."

What surprised Rosenblatt even more than Norris' lack of power, was his lack of verbal coherency.

"When we signed to fight, I thought he sounded bad," said Rosenblatt. "But at a



Judging by the expression on his face, Norris was obviously out on his feet at the end of the Mullings fight. Mullings feels that Norris may have hastened the end of his career by engaging in too many gym wars.



Even though Norris stopped Nick Rupa in the 10th round, his father saw signs of deterioration in his son's victory. But because Terry was still working so hard at his craft, the elder Norris overlooked the warning.

[subsequent] press conference, his speech just wasn't there. It was kind of scary."

In the wake of the Rosenblatt debacle, and at Terry's insistence, Team Norris chose to ignore the ominous warnings of deterioration, and instead rationalized it and accepted the Boudouani fight.

"We all thought Rosenblatt would be an easy fight," said Orlin Norris Sr., the fighter's father and trainer. "I figured Rosenblatt was almost a light heavyweight at fight time. We were fighting in his hometown, he was used to taking the punches of bigger men, plus he was a southpaw. You put all those things together and it made sense to give Terry another chance."

The Rosenblatt fight took place at the Foxwoods Casino in Mashantucket, Connecticut, about a two-hour drive from Rosenblatt's home in Malden, Massachusetts. Woodworth said that on the airplane ride home to California, everyone initially pleaded with Norris to retire, but he was adamant about having one more opportunity to recapture his past glory and go out on his own terms.

"Terry was heartbroken after the Rosenblatt fight," said Woodworth. "Contrary to all the bad things that were written about us for taking the Boudouani fight, we urged him to retire. But Terry looked us all in the eye and said he wanted one more shot, just to know in his heart it was over. For a fighter who had accomplished as much as he did, he had the right to make that decision."

While Woodworth relented, he said he vowed to stop the Boudouani fight at the first sign of trouble. According to him and Orlin Jr., that is exactly what happened. As the Frenchman was hitting Norris at will in the ninth round, the corner hurled a towel into the ring to signify surrender. Terry received $100,000 and a rousing applause from the fans for what will hopefully be his final ring appearance. Orlin Jr. said he was watching the fight on the television monitor in the dressing room and "as soon as Terry started getting pot-shotted the towel was thrown in." On the flight home, Norris, whose record stood at 47-9 (31), appeared optimistic when happily announcing that he would finally be saying goodbye to the game he loved so much. Woodworth said everyone was ecstatic not only because he was getting out when the getting was good, but because "the next stop would be the Hall of Fame."

"People can tell a fighter over and over that it's time to give it up," said Orlin Jr. "But a fighter has to be ready to do it himself. I think Terry is now ready to be retired, and stay retired. He said he had burned up his body all those years training so hard, and he didn't want to do it anymore. It's been a long time coming."

Ironically, those closest to Norris insist he is nearly as fine a physiological specimen as he has always been. Both Orlin Sr. and Woodworth noticed the slurring and loss of balance prior to the Mullings fight, but Woodworth says he was given a full neurological exam immediately afterward at the renowned Scripps Institute in San Diego and had passed. Orlin Sr. said much of the slurring comes from a throat condition that he shares with his son. Both talk fast, and their throats dry out easily, he explained, a problem easily rectified by drinking lots of water.

"He's not as bad as he should be with all those fights," Orlin Sr. said. "And he's thinking all right, too. He speaks as normal as anybody when his throat is not dry." He also said now that Terry is not "putting all that wear and tear on his body," his motor skills have returned as well.

Norris' mother, Emily, was glad to see her son retire and said, "Thankfully, he hasn't got hurt, and he still doesn't look

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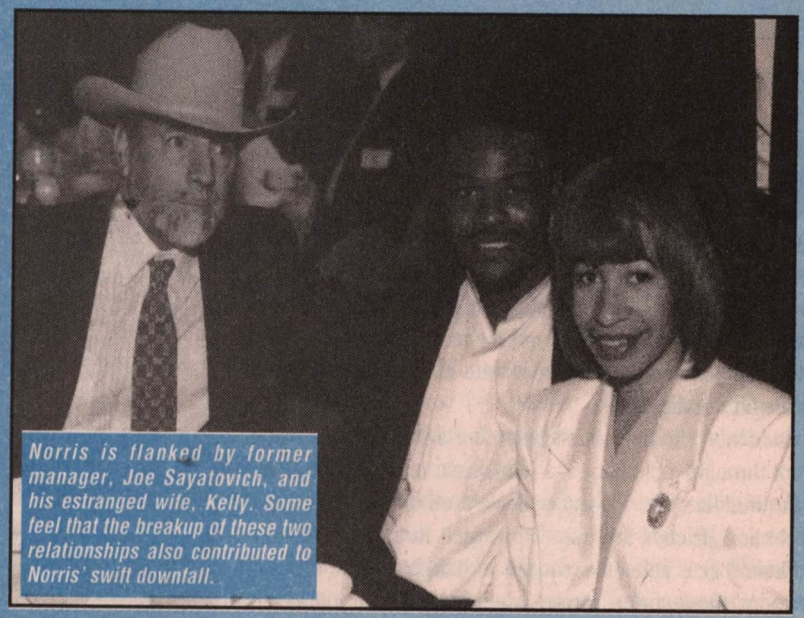


Norris is flanked by former manager, Joe Sayatovich, and his estranged wife, Kelly. Some feel that the breakup of these two relationships also contributed to Norris' swift downfall.

Girls ... Movies ... Gambling ... (And Maybe One More Title Shot)

PAZMANIA IS STILL RUNNING WILD!

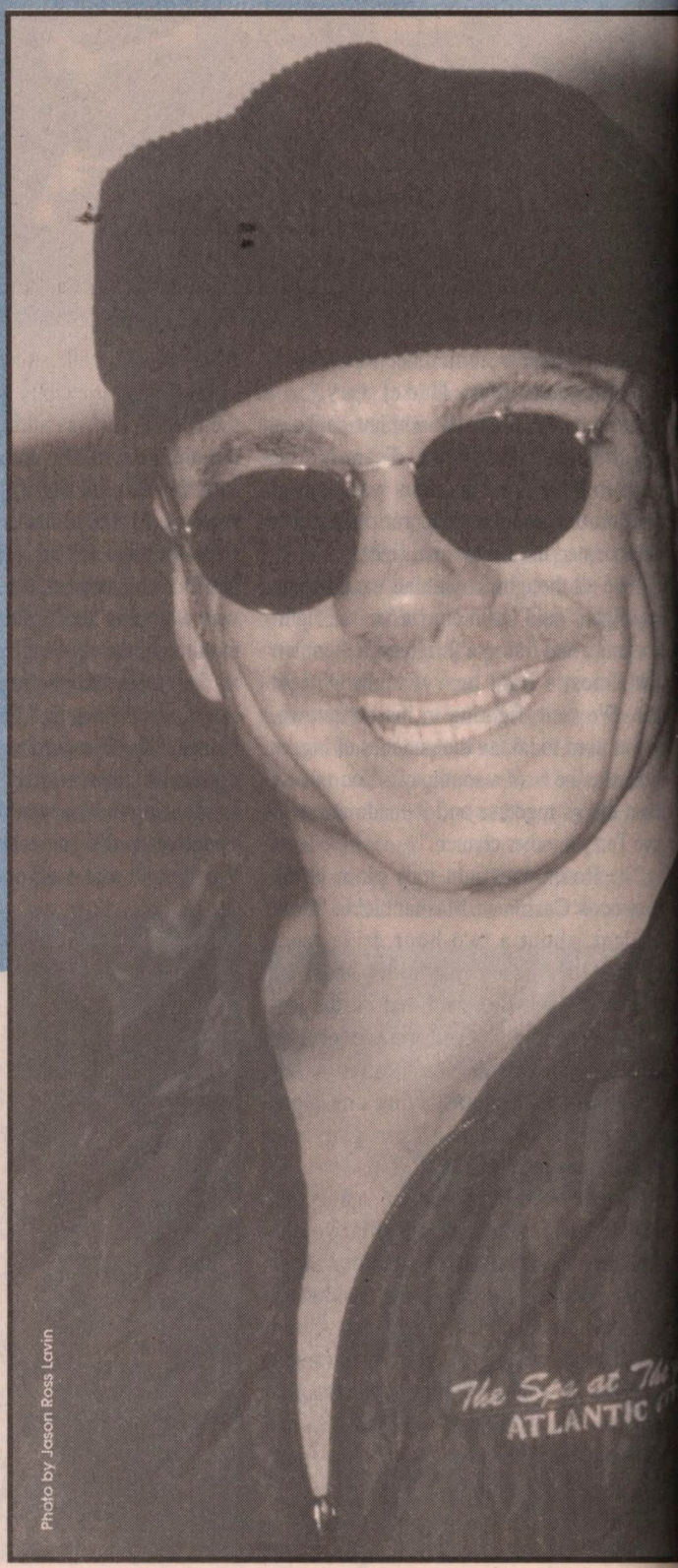
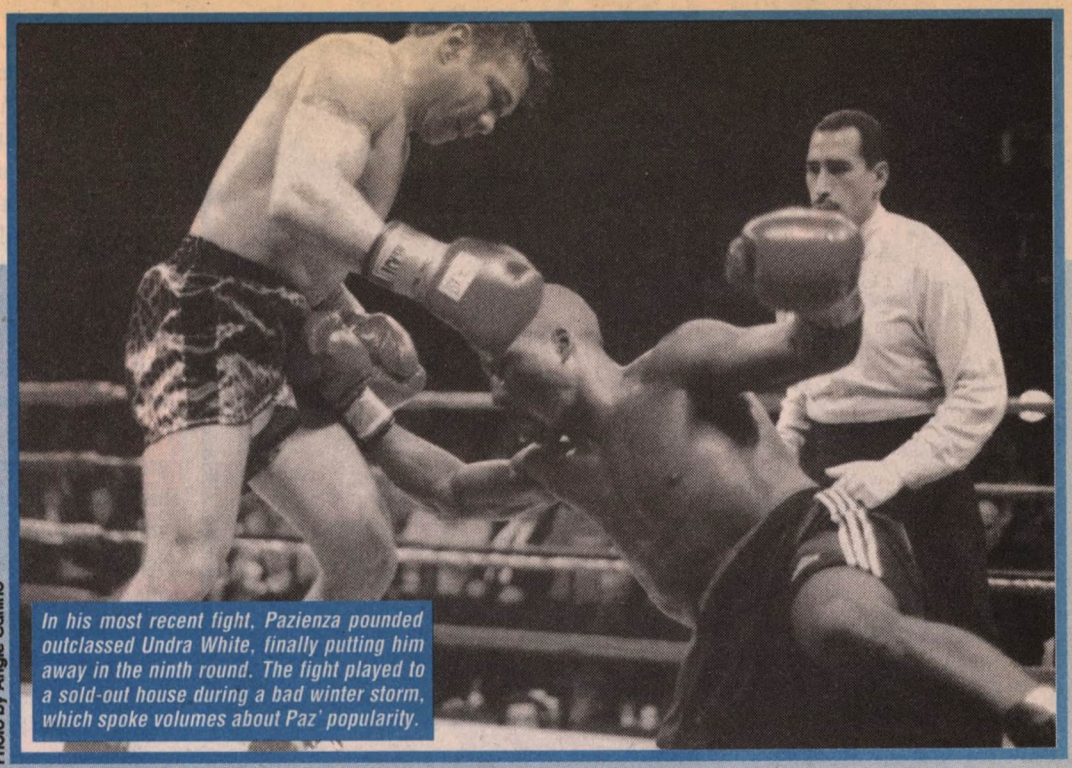


Photo by Jason Ross Lavin

By Jay Miller

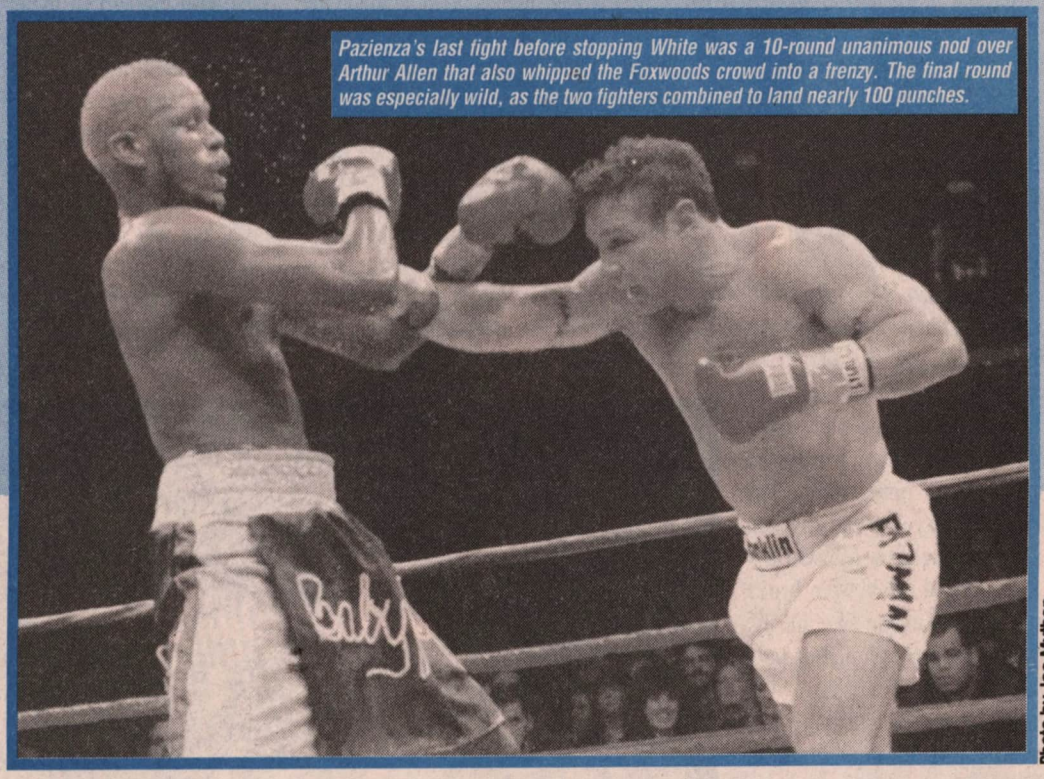
The postfight press conference at Foxwoods Casino was held in a small bar area, and Undra White, who'd just lost the main event on the ESPN2 show in the nearby Fox Theater, was quietly talking to a small circle of reporters at the podium. There were maybe 70 people in the small room, and in the usual boxing tradition, maybe a dozen of them were actually working media, but on that particular night there was an inordinate number of attractive female fans in the mix.

Suddenly, the door burst open and a human tidal wave swept through, a phalanx of a half-dozen men shielding one in the middle. The TV lights flashed on and followed the procession, friends and fans converged in a swirl of hugs and handshakes and a few squeals of delight. At the front of the room, the reporters turned around and started jockeying for new positions. White was suddenly talking to empty



In his most recent fight, Pazienza pounded outclassed Undra White, finally putting him away in the ninth round. The fight played to a sold-out house during a bad winter storm, which spoke volumes about Paz' popularity.

Photo by Angie Carlino



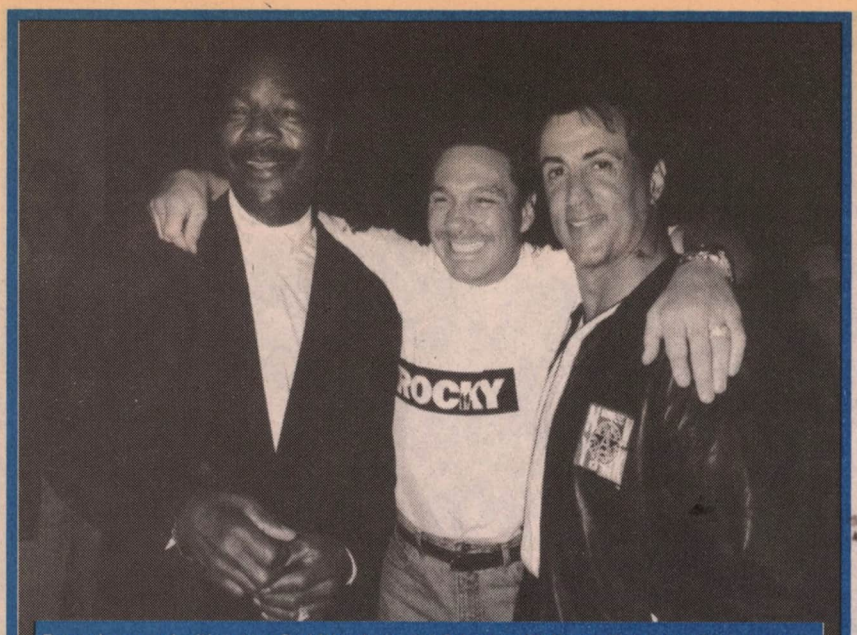
Pazienza's last fight before stopping White was a 10-round unanimous nod over Arthur Allen that also whipped the Foxwoods crowd into a frenzy. The final round was especially wild, as the two fighters combined to land nearly 100 punches.

Photo by Joe Mythen

seats, and he stopped, blinked, and smiled. It wasn't Rod Stewart entering, or even Dennis Rodman, just Vinny Pazienza.

Off to the side, one of the gorgeous female fans rolled her eyes, and said, "I don't think I could stand that much drama in my life." During Pazienza's previous fight, an exciting 10-round decision over Arthur Allen, there were two separate groups of sexy young women, chanting "Vinny." Turns out that one group was from Foxy Lady, Paz' strip club of choice, while the other bevy of beauties was from a new Providence joint called Centerfolds. Competing groups of strippers. You don't get that sort of thing covering the Celtics.

The postfight press conference was typical Pazienza. He was honest and analytical about the fight, and also funny and outrageous. Reporters know if they follow him around long enough, or listen until he runs out of steam, Paz will always say or do something so outlandish they



Paz pals around with actors Carl Weathers and Sylvestor Stallone. The fighter has already appeared in one of Stallone's movies, and is currently shopping a script about his own life.

can't help but end up with a good story. It's always a circus, and the unexpected guest star after the White fight was superfan Russ Como, who attended the match as Paz' guest. Como, a maintenance worker who has been a Paz fan for 14 years, had sent the fighter a photo of his newest tattoo: a finely detailed image of Pazienza that covers most of the left side of his back.

"People call me crazy," Pazienza said as he lifted Como's shirt to reveal the artwork, "but damn, Russ, you *are* crazy!"

When Pazienza departed with his retinue of hometown pals and beautiful women, over in a corner, a couple of reporters interviewed Como. White had been forgotten, a bit player in the ongoing soap opera that is Pazienza's life. On her way out of the room, a female fan broke into a grin and said, "Vinny's like a drug. He's not always good for you, but he's definitely addictive."

That's something boxing fans in general have been rediscovering this year, especially in New England and particularly at Foxwoods, where it's no exaggeration to say that Pazienza has almost singlehandedly revived the casino's boxing program. On the night of the White bout, New England was hit by an all-day storm, with snow, slush, and icy rain pelting the region. Normally a 90-minute drive from Boston, the drive to Foxwoods was almost three hours that night. The worst weather had been in Pazienza's home state of Rhode Island, where four inches of snow made the highways treacherous. Foxwoods' parking lots were virtually empty, and the casino concourse practically deserted. Fully half the press corps didn't make the fight, which was on free TV anyway, but 1,700 Pazmaniacs filled every seat in the Fox Theater in an irrefutable testament to Paz' drawing power.

"I really couldn't believe that many people came out for me in a snowstorm at $165 for the top seats, for a non-title fight!" an incredulous Pazienza said a couple of weeks later as he sat down to eat at Pinelli's North End Cafe, the North Providence restaurant owned by Paz' longtime adviser and promoter, Jimmy Burchfield. "I asked the ESPN crew at some point while I was in my dressing room how the weather was, and they looked at me like I was nuts. I went outside to see and figured the house would be half empty. It was an unbelievable feeling to go out there and see that crowd."

You can't say this latest Pazienza resurgence is any more remarkable than some of his previous comebacks, for this is a boxer who's had more revivals than Aimee Semple MacPherson. Counted out in 1990 after being disqualified in a bid to win the WBA junior welterweight title from Loreto Garza, again after his near-fatal car wreck in '91, and still again following his '95 TKO defeat to Roy Jones, Pazienza is back, putting rear ends in seats and providing his fans with the sort of hyper action that has made him one of the sport's most enduring box office attractions. Currently managed by Bill Cayton and trained by Kevin Rooney, Paz is making what figures to be his last try at winning another world title.

With an overall pro record of 44-7 (29), Pazienza is 13-2 (5) since weightlifting bulked him up to 168 pounds. The only blemishes came against Jones (KO by 6) and Herol Graham (L 12). But like George

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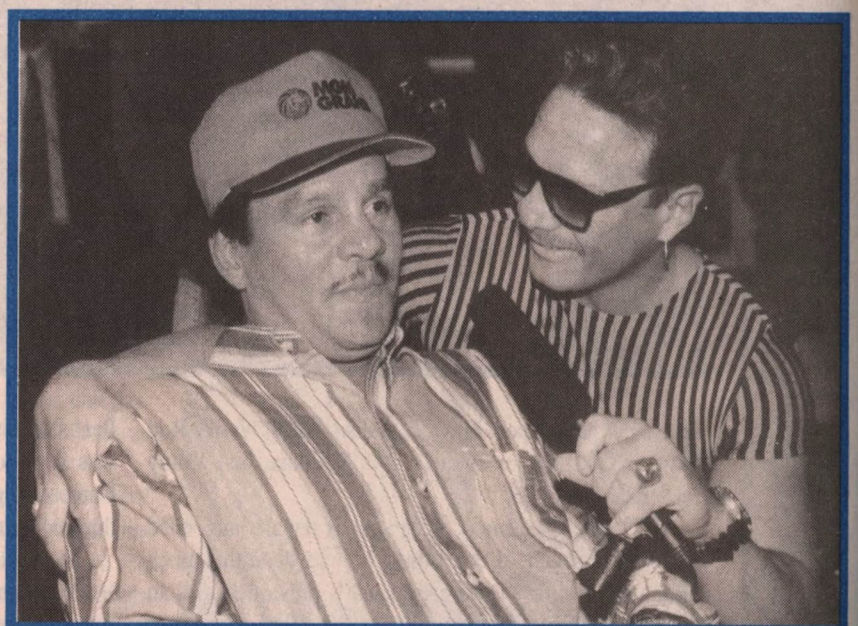
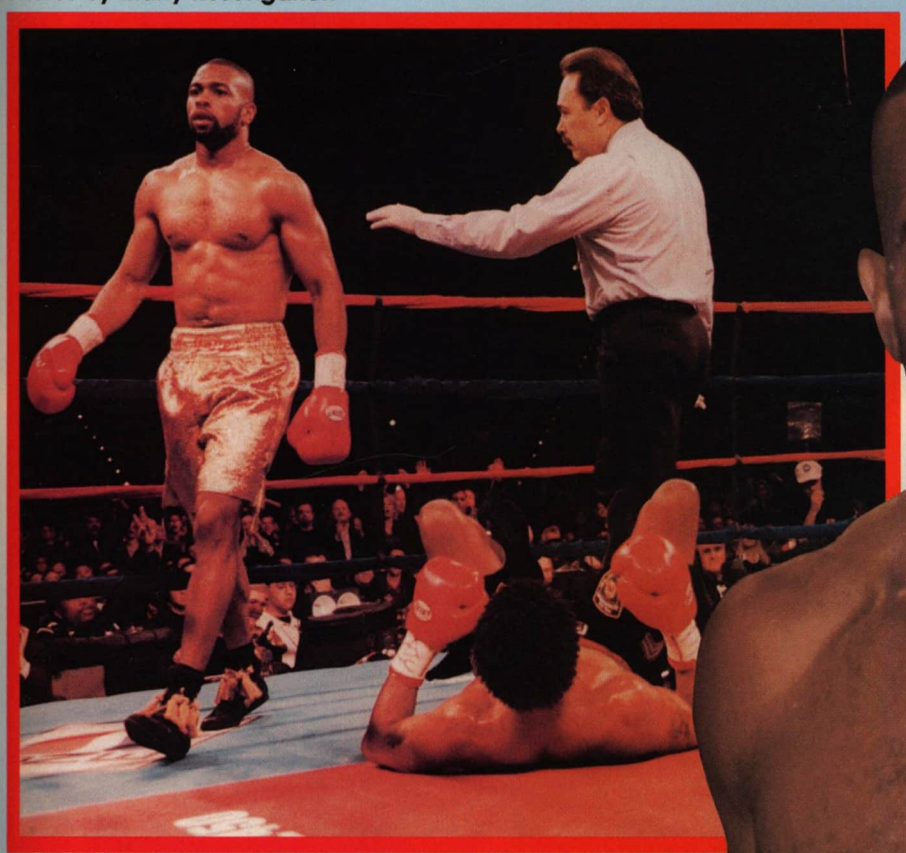


Paz and former rival Roberto Duran clown around during the buildup to their 1994 bout. Despite some animosity at fight time, "Hands Of Stone" is still one of Paz' boxing heroes.

MANDATORY JUNK!

It's Time For Boxing's Elite To Take A Stand!

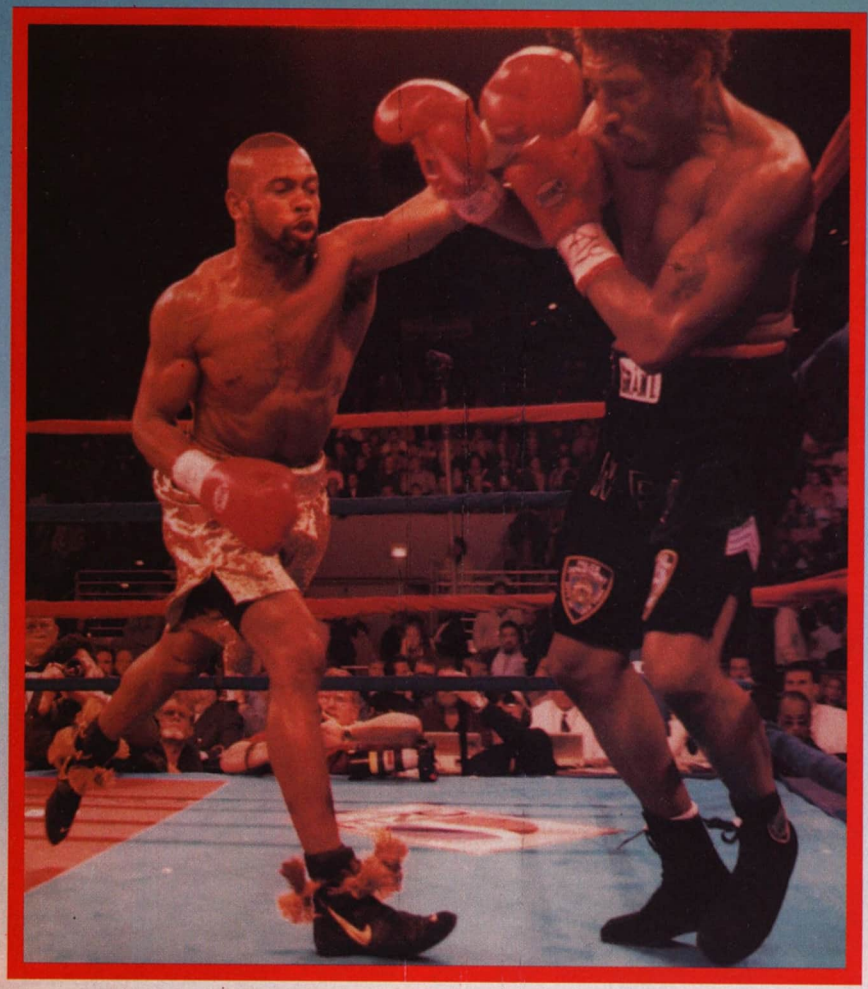
Photos by Marty Rosengarten



WBC/WBA light heavyweight champ Jones scored one of his least satisfying wins when he dispatched hopelessly overmatched Ricky Frazier in two rounds. Frazier was kayoed by the first solid punch Jones landed, a left to the temple, followed by a grazing right.

By Ron Borges

HBO Sports' Senior Vice President Lou DiBella was on a cell phone to ringside only minutes after he'd watched an improperly titled "challenger" named Rick Frazier collapse in a heap following less than two rounds of trying to run away from Roy Jones on January 9. DiBella was apologizing for something over which he had little control. HBO was embarrassed. If Frazier had any sense, he would have been, too.



Jones assaults Frazier along the ropes, while the WBC mandatory challenger simply tries to run away. According to CompuBox statistics, Frazier threw only 29 punches in the fight, and connected with just four.

Reggie Johnson and call the winner anything they want.

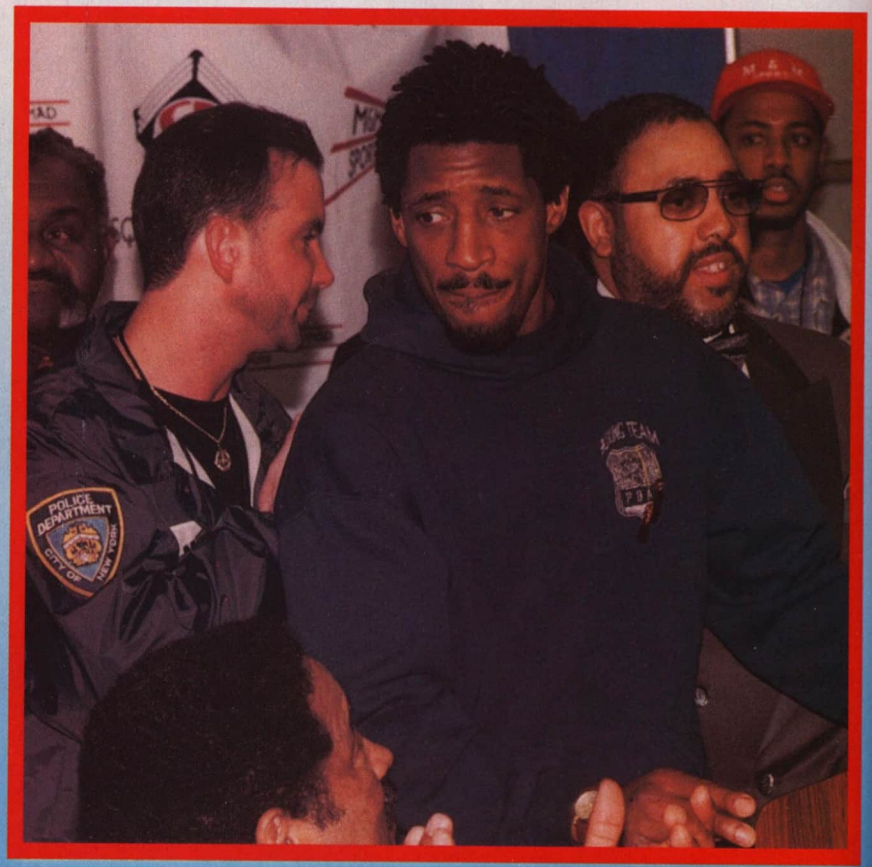
"The idea that Rick Frazier is number one in the WBC and number three in the WBA is ludicrous. Jose Sulaiman should be embarrassed. No wonder [Arizona Senator and Republican presidential candidate] John McCain is chasing after these organizations. Even at a time when some big fights are coming up, this sport continues to shoot itself in the foot."

For once, Sulaiman actually seemed to be embarrassed. Sitting at ringside watching Frazier first run like a thief and then collapse like a lawn chair, the WBC president wore a pained expression. After Jones had mercifully ridded the ring of him, Sulaiman said, "I take full responsibility. I am embarrassed."

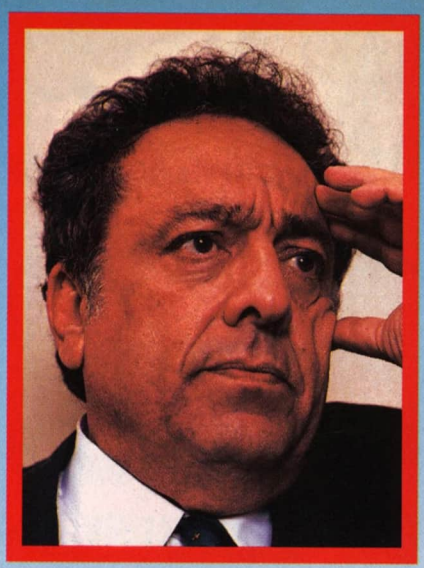
Well, that's a start, because from the moment Sulaiman's organization gave Frazier its number-one ranking, he had been handed a sporting death sentence. A boxer who had not turned pro until he was 32, Frazier is the definition of a clubfighter. He had never made more than $12,000

The network DiBella works for had just televised what it had advertised as a WBC/WBA light heavyweight title fight, yet a week before the opening bell rang, DiBella had called it "a mandated mismatch." And it turned out even that was a mild way of stating the case, so scant minutes after it ended at 2:59 of the second round, he and HBO analyst Larry Merchant were both calling the product "junk."

"I was embarrassed," DiBella said of Jones' lopsided victory over a 39-year-old New York City cop who was so overmatched he should have been taken into protective custody before he left his corner. "For him to be the number-one contender tells you all you need to know about these organizations. That's why I intend to beg Roy to give up his title belts. I know he really wants to unify the titles, but I'll try to get him [IBF champion]



New York City cop Frazier, accompanied at the postfight press conference by manager Grant Elvis Phillips and Jones' promoter, Murad Muhammad, said he felt the referee's stoppage was premature. He may have been the only person at the Pensacola Civic Center who held that opinion.



HBO Sports Vice President Lou DiBella (left) said WBC President Jose Sulaiman's decision to make Frazier the number-one contender was an embarrassment, and Sulaiman (right) surprisingly agreed. "I take full responsibility," Sulaiman conceded afterward.

for a bout, and deservedly so. He was a moonlighter, a full-time cop working out of the 26th precinct in Harlem who boxed part-time to help pay the bills. How those facts or his 18-3-1 (7) record led him to be a number-one contender is not difficult to explain. It is impossible to explain.

"It's not Roy Jones' fault the WBC ranked this guy the number-one contender," said veteran fight trainer and HBO boxing analyst Gil Clancy. "How or why, I don't know. I don't know how anybody could make that stand up."

By the end of the first round, it was evident no one was going to be able to make Frazier stand up for much longer. Jones tried, hoping to please a hometown crowd of 9,200 at the Pensacola Civic Center the best he could, but he dropped Frazier with two right hands that barely grazed him at the end of the first round, and it was clear nothing could save all involved from what was mercifully soon to come.

By the end of the second round, Frazier had gone down again from a far more solid left to the temple and a following right that drove him from a squat to the floor. He got up at nine, but referee Armando Garcia could think of no good reason for him to continue, even though he was upright and alert, so he waved his hands and ended the fight with nary a protest from anyone.

Garcia was right, and if he had listened to Frazier a half-hour later, he would have not only stopped the fight but ordered him to a psychiatric ward.

"I think it was stopped too early," Frazier said earnestly. "I had a game plan. I felt I was doing fine. Regardless of what they might say and think, I thought the stoppage stunk. I'm making him miss. I'm making him crazy."

Actually, he was making Jones embarrassed, an emotion the cocky champion seldom exhibits.

"I was going to take a layoff after this, but I don't want to go out like that," Jones, 39-1 (33), said. "That was kind of quick. Unfortunately, it was not the kind of night I was looking for. It wasn't very satisfying.

"I don't pick these guys. He was the number-one contender. It's not my job to tell these people what to do. I just fight. I guess the guy brought all he had, but I was looking for more than that."

So was the crowd, but there was no reason to expect it. Frazier had no right to be in the same ring with Jones, just as he had no right being anyone's number-one contender except for the fact that the designation no longer means anything. The pity was that he had to be embarrassed in this way to satisfy the voracious appetite for sanctioning fees of organizations like the WBC. It is they who sacrificed a 39-year-old cop on national television. It is they who embarrassed HBO, Jones, more than 9,000 paying customers, and the people who love the fight game. Yet when it was over, it was they who couldn't be found while poor Frazier was left to try and make an alibi for himself. The one he came up with was one he never would have bought from a perp he pinched on the streets.

But why does HBO agree to televise such fights when they know what is com-

(Continued on page 57)

Like Jones, Oscar De La Hoya has been forced by the WBC to face undeserving mandatories as well, such as Patrick Charpentier last June. HBO's Seth Abraham believes men like De La Hoya and Jones can use their star power to silence the alphabet bodies.

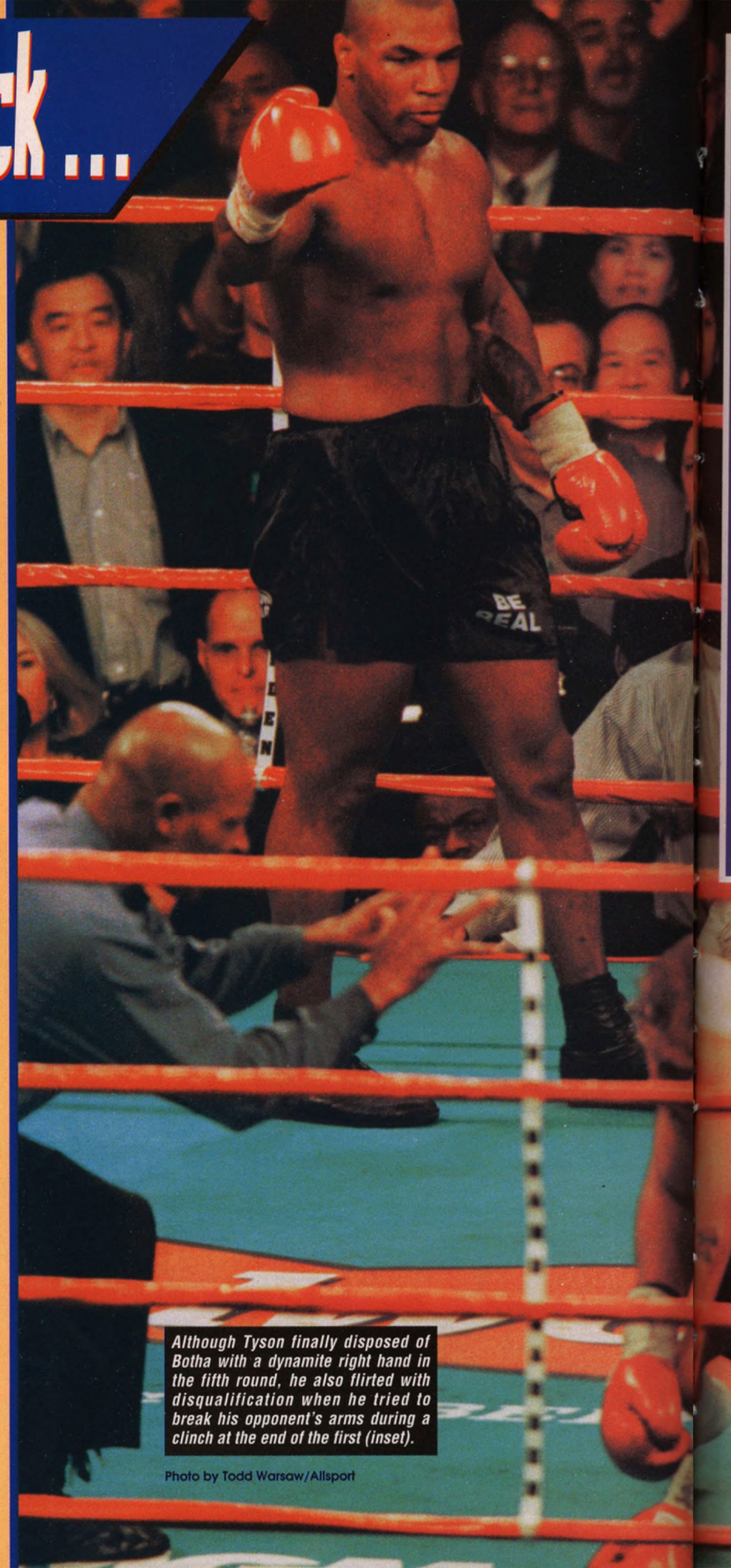
Tick, Tick, Tick...

IS TYSON READY TO BLOW?

By Bernard Fernandez

Remember how it was in school, particularly if you weren't one of the honor-roll kids? You'd start getting antsy around the middle of May, each seemingly endless day heightening the anxiety during the countdown to summer vacation. And if you needed to pass those final exams to avoid additional internment in summer school, hoo, boy, that ratcheted the pressure up even more.

Every marginal student, every one with a behavioral problem, reacted the same way to the final day of class and a passed-by-the-skin-of-his-teeth report card: *I'm free*. Free to do my own thing, to do and say what I want without some disapproving teacher or hall monitor peering over my shoulder.



Although Tyson finally disposed of Botha with a dynamite right hand in the fifth round, he also flirted with disqualification when he tried to break his opponent's arms during a clinch at the end of the first (inset).

Photo by Todd Warsaw/Allsport

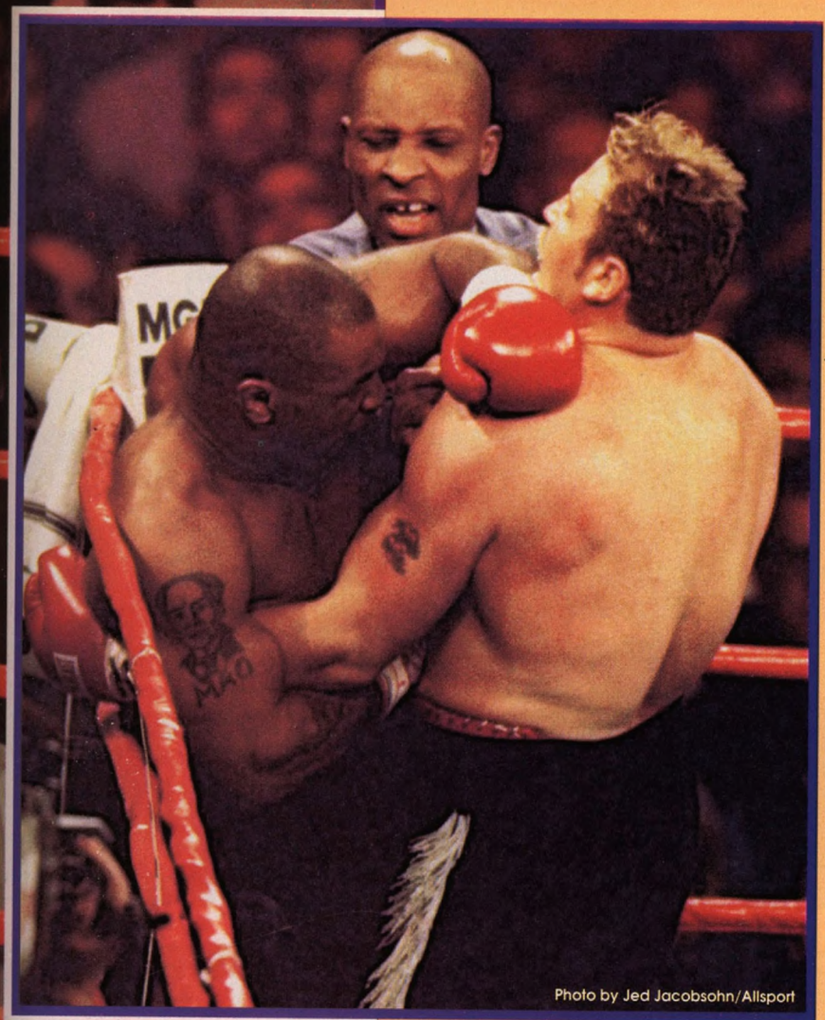


Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

Three months off can offer the illusion of boundless liberty and unrestricted movement. But as September nears, the anxiety always returns. More tests, more teachers, more disapproving looks, and more detentions await the unreformed problem child.

And if you believe the discomfort runs down a one-way street, well, think again. Having that spitball-throwing guy with the surly attitude back in class is no great thrill for harried educators. But a teacher's charge is to instruct everyone to the best of his ability, be they on the fast track to Princeton or the penitentiary, so an uneasy alliance again is formed.

Perhaps that age-old scenario explains the recent behavior of Mike Tyson, whose shift from contriteness to confrontation in the weeks leading up to his comeback bout against Francois Botha suggests a 32-year-old adolescent with a nagging case of attention-deficit disorder. It also might explain the frustration of some members of the Nevada State Athletic Commission who probably understood what they were letting themselves in for when they restored Tyson's boxing license and, in effect, showed him to his desk and another crossroads opportunity to conform or disrupt.

"I voted against him, remember," Dr. James Nave, who cast the sole dissenting ballot when the Nevada commission relicensed Tyson by a 4-1 margin, said of Tyson's bizarre actions before, during, and after his fifth-round knockout of Botha at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. "I said at that time I hoped we could protect the integrity of the state, the integrity of the sport, and that we could help Mike Tyson. I still hope for those things.

"If he had done something to get himself disqualified, the commission certainly would have become involved, but I think it would be improper on my part to speculate on what-ifs. Right now, I don't think further action against Mike Tyson is warranted."

Added Luther Mack, another member of the Nevada commission: "Personally, I have concerns. Tyson's behavior has raised those concerns. But Botha was taunting him, too. I don't like taunting. I don't think it has any place in boxing, or in any sport. I think Botha's taunting drew out the old Mike Tyson. It was like waving a red flag before a bull."

Red flag before a bull? Tyson played the role of matador for his final pre-Botha appearance in Nevada, attempting to remove Evander Holyfield's ears—with his bicuspids—during their June 28, 1997, bout at the MGM. By his efforts to make Commander Vander his personal chew toy, in the full view of 16,000-plus on-site spectators, a worldwide pay-per-view audience in the millions, and hanging-judge referee "Maximum Mills" Lane, Iron Bite earned himself a disqualification following the third round, instant and perhaps everlasting notoriety, and, perhaps most significantly for someone with a cash-flow problem, a "permanent" revocation of his boxing license and a record $3-million fine. It was like some weird permutation of *Real TV* and *Silence Of The Lambs*.

No wonder the Nevada commission felt

Never a dull moment when Tyson is involved: A phalanx of security guards cordon off the ring after order is restored following the ruckus at the end of the first round.

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

TYSON'S ONE-PUNCH COMEBACK

New trainer Tommy Brooks said he was going to bring Mike Tyson back to the basics of Cus. What we saw—and heard—from Tyson was less Cus (D'Amato) and more cuss, as in a stream of blue language. If Tyson's thoroughly flawed performance in a fifth-round knockout of Francois Botha is any indication, the two-time former heavyweight champion poses a greater threat to Andrew "Dice" Clay than to the winner of the Evander Holyfield-Lennox Lewis unification showdown.

Tyson, fighting for the first time in 19 months, delivered more f-words in press conferences than blows in the ring. But the payoff punch, the short overhand right that deposited Botha on the canvas woozier than Foster Brooks during happy hour, was all Iron Bite needed to escape the Grand Canyon of a hole he was digging for himself.

At the time of the stoppage at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas—2:59 of the fifth round, to be exact—the erstwhile baddest man on the planet somehow had managed to get himself behind by five, five, and three points on the scorecards. How's this for an amazing feat? Tyson actually was helping Botha look like the superior boxer "The White Buffalo" had claimed to be. Floating like a bee and stinging like a butterfly, Botha, 233, Pretoria, South Africa, became so emboldened by the sight of Tyson's loaded-up, single-shot bombs

Tyson breaks through Botha's defense

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

Botha did well the first four rounds, building a substantial lead on the judges' scorecards. But unfortunately for the South African, his best shots failed to faze Tyson.

compelled to make Tyson write "I am sorry" on the blackboard 100 times and stand in a corner during recess. Rumor also has it that he was required to consume double portions of that yucky carrot-and-raisin salad during lunch while skipping dessert.

But, once relicensed, the Tyson who repeatedly mumbled apologies and asked forgiveness was replaced by an emboldened version of the rascally kid finally set free on summer vacation. Hey, that penitence thing can get old in a hurry. It was time for Tyson to kick back (fellow motorists), crank up the gangsta rap, and rediscover his own true self.

"Arrogance is an ingredient of greatness," Tyson said in the days leading up to the Botha fight. If that is the case, let no man say that Tyson did not do everything he could to spice up his personal recipe for greatness. Even as Tyson's principal adviser, Shelly Finkel, and the other image-conscious members of his reconstituted support team worked feverishly to transform him into a touchy-feeler doer of good deeds, their client occasionally went off on vulgar or outrageous outbursts. For every Finkel-orchestrated step forward, Tyson seemed determined to take two steps back. Call it subtraction by addition.

"To expect someone to be different in a week is foolish," Finkel said after another sewer-mouthed Tyson saturation bombing of the media. "But, with time, I think you'll see a change in Mike because he wants to make changes. He's working to change his life. But no one can imagine—and I'm not saying whether it's his fault or not—how much some of things that have been said and written about him hurt. There are a lot of things that have been said and written about him that aren't correct.

"You have a fellow who, for a long, long time, was the greatest fighter around.

missing their mark that he tried to mimic the cutesy-poo moves of such elusive technicians as Muhammad Ali and Sugar Ray Leonard. He dropped his hands to his sides, thrust his chin forward, and dared Tyson to hit it.

Never one to look a gift horse, or buffalo, in the mouth, Tyson, 223, Catskill, New York, gratefully unwrapped the present he had been offered and hammered Botha on the chin. Oh, Tyson might have eventually tracked down and slain the pale beast that had been bedeviling him, but Botha appeared to have had a real chance of pulling off the upset had he just stuck with the well-conceived plan.

"I was controlling [the fight] real easy," Botha, 30, said. "I was keeping away from Mike's power. After a while, I really thought it would be easy. But I let my guard down. I started fooling around too much, probably."

Brooks had promised more reforms than a politician up for reelection. He would return Tyson to the basics, get him doing the same things he had done when he was a teenage terror-in-training under curmudgeonly Svengali D'Amato.

If any of that was evident to 12,159 on-site spectators and a pay-per-view audience of an estimated 750,000 households, it must have happened when everyone was blinking. Tyson, 32, threw 10 powershots in the first round, not only missing them all, but whiffing so badly that it seemed his gloves and Botha's head were in a different area code. You half-expected a telephone operator's voice to come over the sound system announcing, "That will be 35 more cents for the next three left hooks."

But Tyson was still dangerous, especially in the clinches. Sure, he kept his teeth holstered, but his weapon of choice as the bell ending the first round was the elbow twist, designed to break bones and leave his tormentor handicapped.

"I was trying to bait him," said Botha, who is not above talking some smack to his opponents. "I was telling him, 'Everybody's watching you. You'd better start fighting, because you're losing.'"

The postbell fracas after the first round, during which Tyson and Botha were as locked up as a pair of mating bighorn sheep on the Discovery Channel, prompted some members of the MGM Grand's beefed-up security force of 500 to set a land-speed record for cordoning off the ring.

As for the ending ... "I just walked into the punch," Botha, 39-2 (24) with 1 no-contest, said. "We all know Mike has power."

And what was the victor's impression of his night's work?

"I didn't prove anything," Tyson, 46-3 (40), said. "I'm getting my ass back in the gym in maybe two weeks or so ... working on moves and capitalizing on all the things I screwed up tonight."

Finally, some truth in advertising.

—B.F.

He became troubled, very troubled. He's trying to change some things, but it isn't going to happen overnight. Mike's more open to the press. He's more diligent. He's talking to people. Then ... he gets asked some nasty questions and he responds. You want him to respond the way you want him to respond, and he can't do that. Mike's Mike. That's what makes him the good and the bad."

The good: Tyson, during his various relicensing hearings, speaks of his remorse at having bitten Holyfield's ears and how the experience has forever changed him, presumably for the better.

The bad: Only days before he is to fight Botha, Tyson blithely informs a television interviewer, "Yeah, I bit [Holyfield's] ears. So what?"

The good: Tyson speaks of his deep affection for his second wife, pediatrician Monica Turner Tyson, and his children. Whenever he mentions his family, the touchy-feely Tyson comes off as something of a rougher-edged, NC-17 version of Ozzie Nelson.

The bad: While he is in training camp in Phoenix, Tyson, staunch proponent of family values, and three bodyguards are observed ogling naked women at Babe's Cabaret, a topless dancing lounge in suburban Scottsdale.

The good: Tyson expresses gratitude to the Nevada commission for giving him the opportunity to resume his career, an opportunity based, in no small part, on a report from the Mass General team of psychiatrists that he poses no immediate threat to himself, the public or, outside the rules of boxing, his opponents.

The bad: Tyson, who is alleged to have threatened two of the Mass General psychiatrists, thanks them for their mostly beneficial report by comparing them to Nazis.

The good: Tyson, during several interviews with the media, addresses reporters—okay, maybe sarcastically in some instances—as "sir" and "ma'am."

The bad: Asked about his seeming fixation on rage by New York TV anchor Russ Salzberg, Tyson goes ballistic during a live satellite tour, chasing Salzberg off the air with an admonition to "Suck off."

The good: Tyson, having knocked Botha out, rushes, in the manner of a good Samaritan, to prevent a dazed, off-balance Botha from falling through the ropes.

The bad: During a clinch toward the

(Continued on page 57)

HAS TYSON LOST HIS BITE AT THE BOX OFFICE?

Maybe they should have put it in Madison Square Garden.

Mike Tyson, undisputed champion of putting fannies in high-priced seats and big numbers up in pay-per-view, has come to expect that his every fight will do more business than a Rolling Stones world tour. If Tyson is beating someone up for fun 'n' profit, hey, he knows John Q. Public will be there, wallet in hand.

Dismissing the box office potential of the March 13 heavyweight unification showdown between Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis in the Garden, Tyson boasted, "If I fight on the same night, they're out of a job. They can't sell out Madison Square Garden. I can sell out Madison Square Garden masturbating."

Apart from the rather unsavory image of Tyson selling tickets for an act in the Garden that George Michael was arrested for performing in a public toilet stall, Iron Bite is right. If you get paid $30-million for sharing a ring with the oafish Peter McNeeley, you have a right to believe eight-figure paydays, for doing almost anything, are a matter of course.

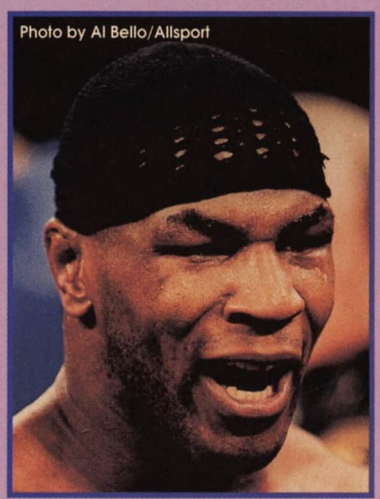


Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Can Tyson still sell himself?

But the times they are a-changing, if Tyson's latest comeback vehicle, against South Africa's Francois Botha, is any indication. Not only was the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, site of five well-attended Tyson bouts, not sold out, but pricey tickets were being discounted at the last minute as if they were leftover 8-track tapes at Sam Goody's. Even though the announced attendance of 12,159 was some 3,500 below capacity, it wouldn't seem too meager were it not for the idea of a Tyson fight being sold on the cheap. An informed source said some ringside seats, with a face value of $1,200, were made available to hotel guests the day of the fight for $40. And blocks of four $800 seats, with a combined value of $3,200, were said to be available to hotel employees for $64, an average of $16 per seat.

The official live gate, as filed by the MGM Grand with the Nevada State Athletic Commission, was $7,051,800.

So, has time taken some of the luster off Tyson? Is he less of a draw than he was before he twice lost to Holyfield, including the infamous ear nibble?

"I think Tyson was losing some steam even before the [Botha] fight," said longtime Philadelphia-area closed-circuit distributor Joe Hand Sr. "People are reacting negatively to the public image he presents, with all the cursing.

"But do I think he's over and done with? No. He's still a marketable commodity, but he has to build himself back up. Remember, he hadn't fought for 19 months, and that makes for a lot of ring rust. What this guy needs to do is to stay active and look better each time out."

Officials of SET, the pay-per-view arm of Showtime, aren't about to hit any panic buttons just yet. They say there are mitigating circumstances to Tyson's less-than-knockout performance of 750,000 PPV buys (down from the record 1.9 million for Holyfield-Tyson II).

"Would I be happier with 800,000 or a million or 1.5 million? Sure, I would be ecstatic," said Showtime Vice President Jay Larkin. "But no other fighter can get 750,000, and we are very comfortable with that."

It was suggested to Larkin that Tyson's raunchy language in interviews had served to further diminish his appeal.

"Tyson is who he is," Larkin reasoned. "Nobody goes to him for Bible class or Miss Manners. He is the first to tell you that."

—B.F.

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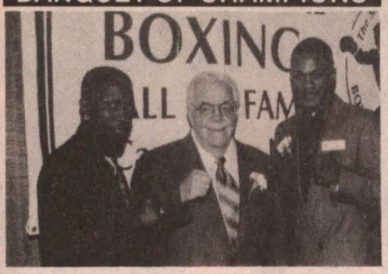

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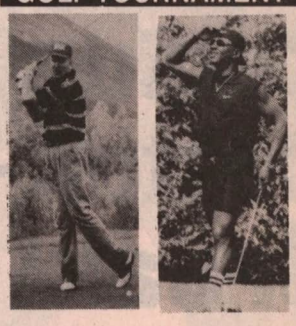

Fore . . . Gerry Cooney tees off and Marvelous Marvin Hagler spots his shot.

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Alumni . . . Left, Canto, Duva, and Saad Muhammad show off Hall of Fame rings. At right, Sugar Ray Leonard and Jose Torres at their 1997 induction.

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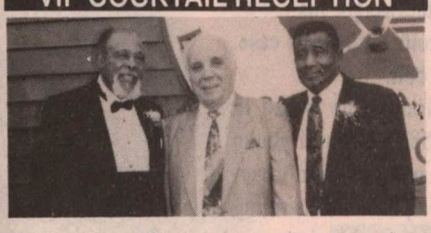

Fine aged as wine . . . Legendary champions Moore, LaMotta, Patterson welcome fans at VIP gala reception.

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Conditioning . . . Kevin Kelley works the speed bag while Christy Martin focuses during shadowboxing for the public on the Museum grounds.

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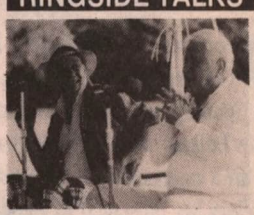

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FORMER BANTAMWEIGHT CONTENDER

JESUS PIMENTEL

A Knockout Artist Who Couldn't Get A Cotton-Picking' Break!

Pimentel catches Fabian Esquival with a right en route to a fourth-round kayo victory in 1965. Esquival was one of "Little Poison's" victims just after his streak of 28 consecutive knockouts had ended.

Holy turnbuckle, Batman. When do I get a title shot? Pimentel and his manager, Harry Kabakoff, were as close as the fictional crime-fighting duo whose costumes they've borrowed. But instead of criminals, they fought the boxing establishment.

By Pete Ehrmann

Prominently displayed in the North Hills, California, home of Jesus Pimentel is a framed photograph of the diminutive boxer known as "Little Poison" with the founder of THE RING magazine. In a case nearby is the five-foot-high trophy that Nat Fleischer presented to Pimentel in that 1969 picture, inscribed to "the greatest knockout punching bantamweight in boxing history." That was unarguably the case when Pimentel was a wrecking ball, smashing through the 118-pound division 35 years ago, surpassing triple-champion Henry Armstrong's record of 27 straight knockouts en route to a career total of 72 stoppages in 81 victories (only seven defeats).

But another trophy that would've indelibly put his stamp on bantamweight history is conspicuously absent from Pimentel's case. There's no world championship belt.

"I should've been champion of the world in 1964," said Pimentel, who, at 58, looks still young and fit enough to give it a shot today. It didn't happen because the politicians and alphabeticians ruling the sport even then sent the popular Mexican star into exile for a whole year at the peak of his career, as punishment for Pimentel's and his manager's refusal to go along with one of their charades.

Thirty-five years later, Little Poison dismisses it as "water over the dam" with the good nature that has always been his trademark as much as the

While Pimentel was used to fighting for chicken feed on the Tex-Mex border circuit, he got the bird after scoring a fifth-round knockout of Malico Robles. Actually, awarding the winner a fighting cock is a Mexican tradition.

liver punches that left so many opponents twitching on the canvas. He's satisfied that he honored the pledge made to himself to do everything in his own power to become successful in the ring.

That was in 1959, after Pimentel decided that boxing was preferable to picking cotton for one dollar a day. That's how he made a living in his native Mexico after the U.S. Immigration Department caught up with the Pimentels in Los Angeles and, in the fighter's words, "threw us back." The family—father, mother, and nine children—had slipped into the country illegally when Jesus, born in the village of Sayula, was five. They ranged around the Golden State picking crops, and Pimentel had gone through grammar and high school in Los Angeles when the feds got onto them and sent them packing back to Mexico. In Mexicali, just south of the U.S. border, it got as hot as 120 degrees in the fields.

"We used to work there all day, picking and dragging the bags behind us," he recalled. "I didn't want to be a cotton-picker all my life."

So Pimentel took a job in a gas station owned by Nick Rodriguez, the region's top boxing promoter. The other young employees there were aspiring boxers, and Pimentel started going to the gym. Thrown in as a substitute against an experienced opponent in his first amateur match, Pimentel was stopped in the third round.

"It was a terrible beating the guy gave me, and I said, 'This is not for me,'" he said. But two weeks later Pimentel was back in the gym after making what he says was the biggest decision of his life. While reading a story about Jose "Toluco" Lopez, a 1950s bantamweight whom Pimentel recalls as "the biggest [boxing] idol Mexico ever had," he made up his mind to dedicate himself and learn the business.

"I decided then," said Pimentel, "to live only for my career."

If that was the most momentous episode in his life, the most fortuitous one was when Harry Kabakoff entered it soon thereafter.

"I was the Billy Martin of boxing managers, fighting with everybody," said Kabakoff, now 76 and living in Llano, California. A large, colorful man given to oversized Hawaiian shirts, Kabakoff had worked with heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson and welterweight champs Don Jordan and Kid Gavilan, among many more big names, when he showed up at Rodriguez' Mexicali gas station in 1959 to inquire about another fighter. He didn't speak Spanish, so Rodriquez called over one of his young employees who was washing a bus to translate for him. It was Pimentel.

"I didn't like him," said Jesus, to whom the mustachioed, rotund visitor seemed to be just another Mexican-American who'd neglected the mother tongue. But, recalled Kabakoff, a native New Yorker whose real name is Melville Himmelfarb, "I finally convinced him I was a Russian-Polish-Jew, for Christ's sake, and from there on it was love all the way."

That isn't hyperbole.

"Truly, a father and son couldn't have a better relationship," said Marty Denkin, a longtime California coach, official, and referee who has known Pimentel and his twin brother, Jose Luis—known as "Big Poison" during his 1970s career as a top featherweight contender—since their boyhoods. "Nobody could've taken care of a fighter like Harry took care of Jesus. I think the love and protection that one manager had for a fighter was never more so."

Pimentel listened, too, when Kabakoff warned that drinking soda and eating pie would kill him, and said that great fighters did roadwork and chopped wood religiously. But he did balk early on when Kabakoff insisted that he stop moving around so much in the ring and start throwing bombs.

"Don't change my style," Pimentel protested. "I'm not a puncher, I'm a boxer."

When he vaulted over Armstrong in the record book by scoring his 28th straight knockout, Kabakoff made a sign with the ironic quote and pasted it in Pimentel's scrapbook.

After winning a decision in his first pro fight on July 18, 1960, Pimentel ran off 10 straight wins before losing a 10-rounder to Trina Savala in Sacramento, California, on

Pimentel's slugging style made him a hero on both sides of the Mexican-American border. Here he attracts a crowd of young admirers while training in Cuaymos, Mexico.

July 11, 1961. "It was a ridiculous decision," he recalls. "I got a rematch in Mexicali [two years later] and knocked him out in the second round."

It was right after the first Savala bout that Little Poison embarked on his 28-bout kayo streak that ran from August 29, 1961, until Mauro Miranda lasted 10 rounds against him on August 30, 1964. In the midst of it, on August 16, 1963, Pimentel literally arrived with a bang in Los Angeles in a head-on collision with fellow Mexican knockout artist Jose "Portillo" Lopez. The huge showdown, held before 8,000 fans at the Olympic Auditorium, had been a long time coming. Loser in just one of 38 previous bouts, Lopez, was a "house" fighter for L.A. promoters George Parnassus and Aileen Eaton, and before he accepted the match, Kabakoff insisted on a guarantee of $7,500, or 15 percent of the live gate, for the 33-1 Pimentel. Up to then, the fighter had never made more than $500.

The fight, recalled Kabakoff, "was a war for five, six rounds, life or death for both of 'em." After the seventh, the manager decided it was time for his warrior to pull some rank. "You're fighting like a private," he told Pimentel in his corner. "You'd better start fighting like a general!"

Victory was declared in the next round, with Lopez out on the canvas.

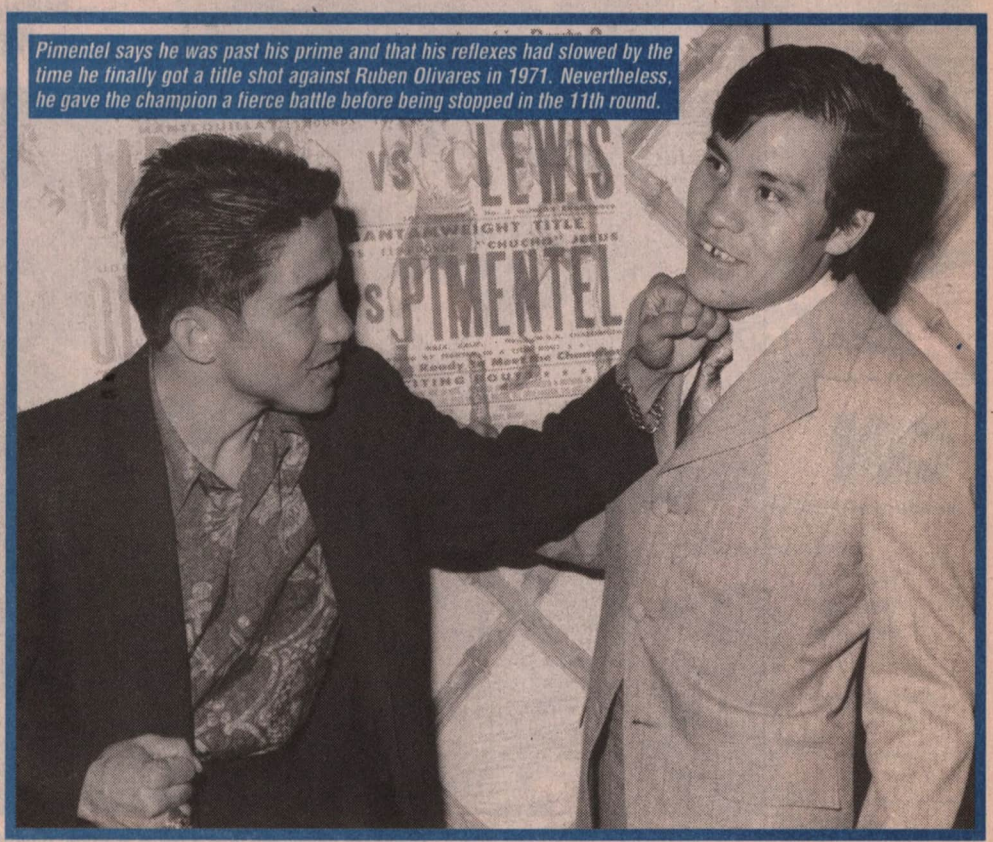
"That was the fight that made me in Los Angeles," said Pimentel.

Next came what Kabakoff cites as "my happiest moment in boxing." After he and Pimentel returned to their room at the Mayfair Hotel, "I had about $11,000 in cash, in 20s and 10s," said the manager. "I threw it on the bed, and the kid almost died. Remember, when I found him, Jesus was making a dollar a day picking cotton. He lived with his family in a one-room dump carpeted in cardboard."

In the early-'60s, American network television fight broadcasts featured only boxers in the bigger weight classes, and those below the lightweight ranks were virtually invisible on the national sports radar screen.

"Today, in most parts of the United States, a bantamweight has about as much chance of making headlines as we have of getting a love note from Greta Garbo," wrote Robert J. Thornton in *Boxing Illustrated*. But, he added after Pimentel came off the deck to stop Ray Asis at the L.A. Sports Arena at the end of 1963, "there's one 118-pounder whose name is

(Continued on page 63)



Pimentel says he was past his prime and that his reflexes had slowed by the time he finally got a title shot against Ruben Olivares in 1971. Nevertheless, he gave the champion a fierce battle before being stopped in the 11th round.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Mike Tyson KO 5 Frans Botha
Michael Grant KO 10 Ahmad Abdin
Andrew Golota W 10 Jesse Ferguson
Arthur Williams KO 1 Art Jimmerson
Razor Ruddock KO 2 Tony LaRosa
Jeremy Williams KO 1 Derrick Roddy
Michael Rush W 10 Art Pendergrass
Danell Nicholson KO 4 Levi Billups
Derrick Jefferson KO 2 Marcellus Brown
Sajad Abdul Aziz KO 3 Don Diego Poeder
Julius Francis KO 3 Pele Reid
Vincenzo Cantatore KO 3 Andy Sample
Mount Whitaker KO 7 Alex Stewart
Ramon Garbey KO 9 Leeonzer Barber
Gerald Nobles W 8 John Kiser
Eliecer Castillo W 8 Louis Monaco
Fres Oquendo W 6 Duncan Dokiwari

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Silvio Meinel W 10 Michael Kloetsch

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Roy Jones KO 2 Rick Frazier
(Retains WBA/WBC Titles)
Giovanni Nardiello KO 6 Csaba Olah
Billy Lewis W 12 Demetrius Jenkins

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Thomas Tate KO 10 Merqui Sosa
Vinny Pazienza KO 9 Undra White
Dana Rosenblatt W 10 Sam Calderon
David Starie KO 3 Willie Quinn
Omar Sheika KO 3 Anwar Oshana

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Antwun Echols KO 2 Roland Rangel
Brian Barbosa W 12 Kevin Tillman
Agostino Cardamone KO 10 Silvio Branco
Bert Schenk KO 4 Freeman Barr
Rodney Jones W 10 Jaime Lerma

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Francisco Castillejo W 12 Keith Mullings
(Wins WBC Title)
Kofi Jantuah W 10 Santiago Samaniego

WELTERWEIGHTS
Ray Oliveira D 10 Fitz Vanderpool
Paulo Sanchez W 10 Jose Perez

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
Zab Judah KO 4 Wilfredo Negron
James Crayton KO 7 Chris Linson
Michael Ayers KO 5 Jean Gomis
Ener Julio KO 8 Luis Flores
Hiroyuki Sakamoto KO 3 Bert Bado

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Shane Mosley KO 7 Golden Johnson
(Retains IBF Title)
Jean-Baptiste Mendy W 12 Alberto Sicurella
(Retains WBA Title)

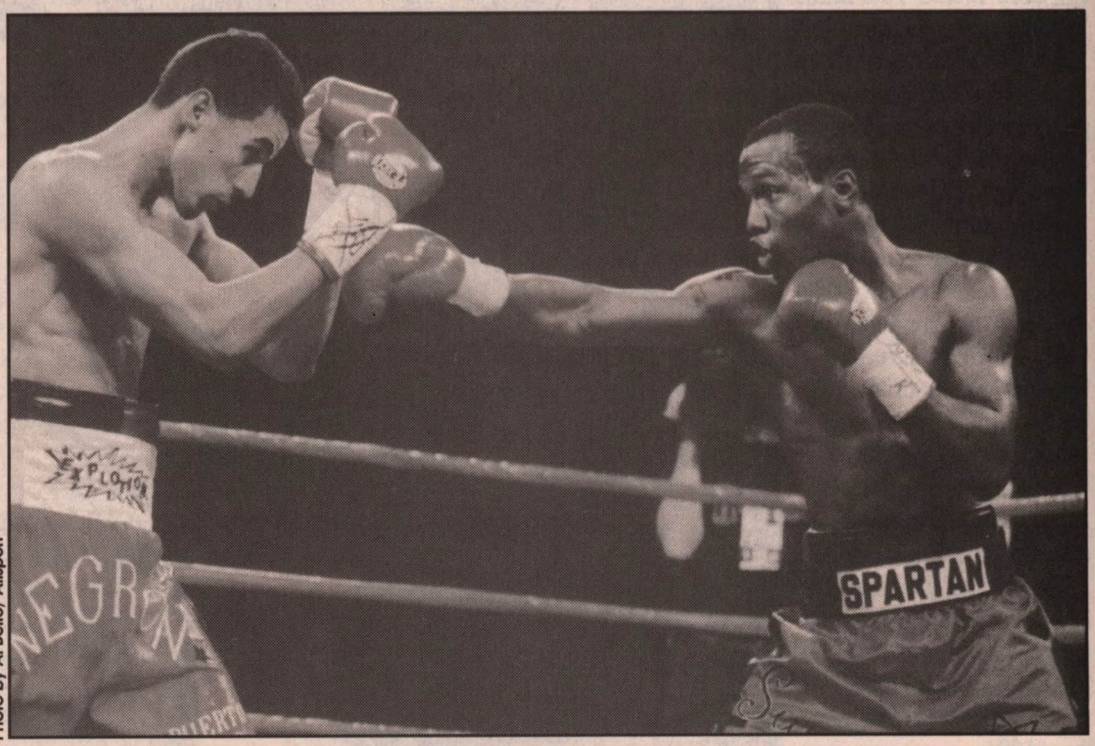


Photo by Al Bello/ Allsport

Southpaw Zab Judah fires a jab at Wilfredo Negron

Goyo Vargas W 12 Ben Tackie
Wilson Rodriguez KO 2 Alexander Danilov
Lemuel Nelson W 12 Brian Adams
Oscar Garcia Cano W 12 Alberto Roda
Carlos Hernandez KO 4 Ernest Martinez
Paul Spadafora W 10 Rocky Martinez

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
Roberto Garcia W 12 John-John Molina
(Retains IBF Title)
Derrick Gainer W 12 Harold Warren
Anatoly Alexandrov KO 8 Arnulfo Castillo
Arnulfo Castillo W 10 Armando Bosques
Acelino Freitas KO 4 Peter Buckley
Daniel Alicea W 12 Richard Rivera
Gary Thornhill KO 9 Steve Conway
Augie Sanchez KO 2 Carlos Cantu
In Jin Chi KO 3 Sammy Sordilla
Julio Pablo Chacon KO 2
Miguel Angel Albarado
Nobutoshi Hiranaka W 10 Joel Gonzales
Robbie Peden W 8 Damian Brazoban

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Jesus Salud KO 5 Frangky Mamuaya
Agapito Sanchez KO 8 Jorge Munoz
Claudio Martinet W 12 Juan Cabrera
Atsushi Hagiwara W 10 Powerful Honmo
Cholho Senrima W 10
Roongsurin Lookongchan
Toshiharu Saotome W 10 Joel Junio
Istvan Kovacs W 8 Vincenzo Belcastro
Istvan Kovacs KO 4 Alexander Tiranov
Zahir Raheem W 6 Pasqual Rouse

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
Somsak Sithchajwal KO 8 Elton Taaibos
Osamu Sato KO 7 Yasushi Arai

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Hugo Dianzo KO 9 Jesus Sarabia
Jess Maca W 12 Shin Yamato
Patrick Quka W 12 Shndile Sobandla
Yoshiaki Matsukura KO 4 Ricky Sales

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS
In Joo Cho W 12 Joel Luna Zarate
(Retains WBC Title)
Ratanachai Sor Vorapin KO 6
Fernando Ibarra
Edicson Torres W 12 Ilido Flores

FLYWEIGHTS
Jose Bueno W 12 Dave Coldwell
Ruben Sanchez-Leon W 12 Salvatore Fanni
Hiroki Shinozaki W 10 Rico Macaubos

STRAWWEIGHTS
Songkram Porpaoin Tech. Win 8
Ronnie Magramo

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RINGSIDE REPORTS

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

We know what you're thinking: Mike Tyson? Fighter of the Month? But he looked horrible against Botha! And you're correct in thinking that. His performance against Frans Botha was, for four rounds, arguably the worst of his career, a seminar in ring rust. He fought dirty, twice trying to break Botha's arm, he missed wildly with almost every powerpunch he threw, and he won only one round on one judge's scorecard over the first four stanzas. But sometimes the end result is what really matters, and the end result here was nothing short of awesome.

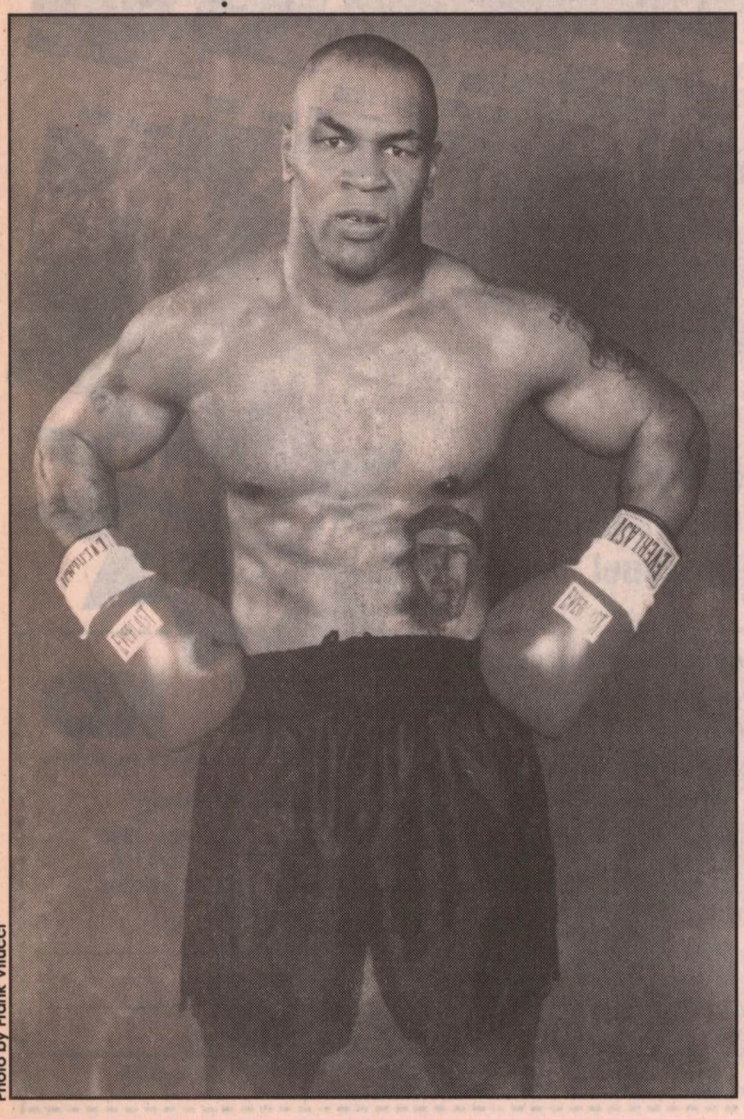

Photo by Frank Vitucci

Besides, who else deserves to be named Fighter of the Month for the time period in question? Not Shane Mosley or Roy Jones, who both looked good ... against hopeless competition. Not Roberto Garcia, who looked great for seven rounds ... then faded so badly he nearly lost to an aging John-John Molina. Tyson may have looked dreadful most of the way against "The White Buffalo," but for that brief instant when his perfectly thrown right hand connected with Botha's chin, he was as dangerous as ever. Tyson isn't the baddest man on the planet anymore, but he did come through with one of the baddest knockouts we've seen in a long time.

• • • •

Mike Tyson

Shane Mosley KO 7 Golden Johnson

Pensacola, Florida: From the first bell to the final 10-count, Golden Johnson no more belonged in a boxing ring with IBF lightweight champion Mosley than Magic Johnson did. This Johnson had no magic to rely on, however, and he would have needed a lot of it to survive his encounter on the undercard of the Roy Jones-Ricky Frazier fight at the Pensacola Civic Center, because when it comes to lightweights, there is Mosley and there is everyone else. And Johnson is far back even in the "everyone else" pack.

To his credit, Johnson did what he could, fighting gamely for as long as his body could take it and even landing an occasional hook when the champion was not paying attention. But for the most part, Mosley paid far too much attention to his business, all at his challenger's expense.

"I was a little surprised he fought back the way he did, but this was a championship fight, and he wanted the belt," Mosley, 31-0 (29), said after stopping Johnson in the seventh round with a crushing bodyshot. "He was swinging with desperation shots. He let me know he was trying to win. He's a durable, strong kid ... with a hard head."

Had his ribs been as hard as his chin, Johnson, 24, might have fared better, but after two rounds of feeling things out, the 27-year-old champion dropped Johnson with two left hooks to the body that sent him to his knees with a pained expression. When Johnson got up, Mosley, 134¾, Pomona, California, methodically stalked him until he landed another perfect left to the ribs that sent poor Johnson down to one knee for the second time with only seconds left in the round.

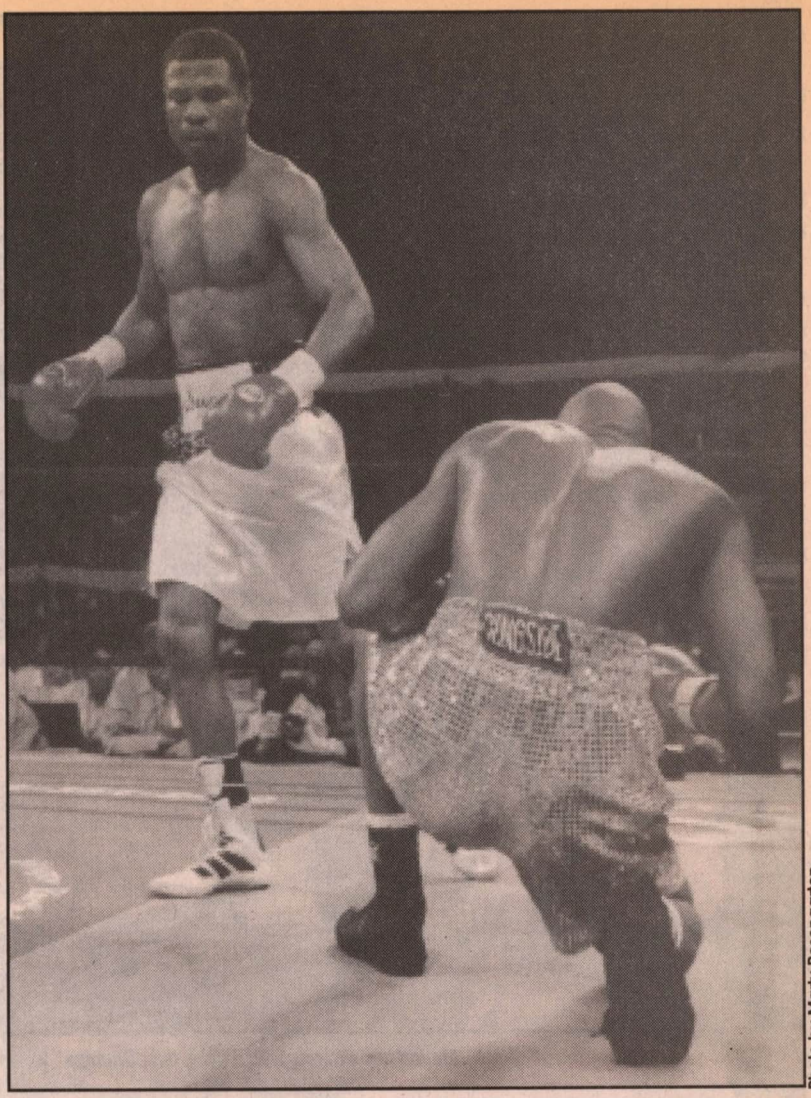

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Mosley's bodyshots accounted for three of his four knockdowns of Johnson

Johnson, 135, Wichita Falls, Texas, was saved by the bell, but he had to be wondering what for after Mosley came right back out in the fourth round and continued to pepper his head. Mosley also dropped several more nasty shots to his ribs whenever the challenger tried to protect his nose from a drubbing.

For two rounds the paced slowed, and in the sixth it ground to a halt when, according to CompuBox punch stats, the challenger failed to land a single punch. This severely limited his opportunities for victory, but did manage to keep him upright for another round, something that would not be the case again. In the seventh, a fierce flurry by Mosley that began with a right hand and ended with a left to the body sent Johnson to a knee for the last time.

As he stared directly at his cornermen, Johnson squatted on one knee as if he were waiting to get a team picture taken with his basketball buddies. As Johnson stared sullenly into the darkness, his arms across his knee as referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) counted him out, his cornermen didn't bother to encourage him to rise because, frankly, what was the point?

Mosley later said he was surprised Johnson didn't get up. But that's because he wasn't on Johnson's end of those punches.

"I wasn't injured at all," Johnson, 15-3-2 (10), said. "No excuses. Those bodyshots just took a toll."

Television: HBO

Promoters: M&M Sports, Cedric Kushner Promotions

(1-9-99)

Ron Borges

Roberto Garcia W 12 John-John Molina

Las Vegas, Nevada: IBF junior lightweight champion Garcia built an insurmountable early lead with his heavy combination punching, and it turned out he needed it to thwart Molina's belated rally, which included a 12th-round knockdown. Garcia captured the unanimous decision on the undercard of Mike Tyson's fifth-round kayo of Francois Botha at the MGM Grand Garden.

For an instant in the final round, it appeared the dreams of Garcia for a rich summer unification bout with Floyd Mayweather Jr., his WBC counterpart, might be in jeopardy. Molina, 130, Fajardo, Puerto Rico, trying from the ninth round on to take command, caught Garcia, 23, flush with a solid right to the jaw early in the 12th that put the champ on his trunks, skid-

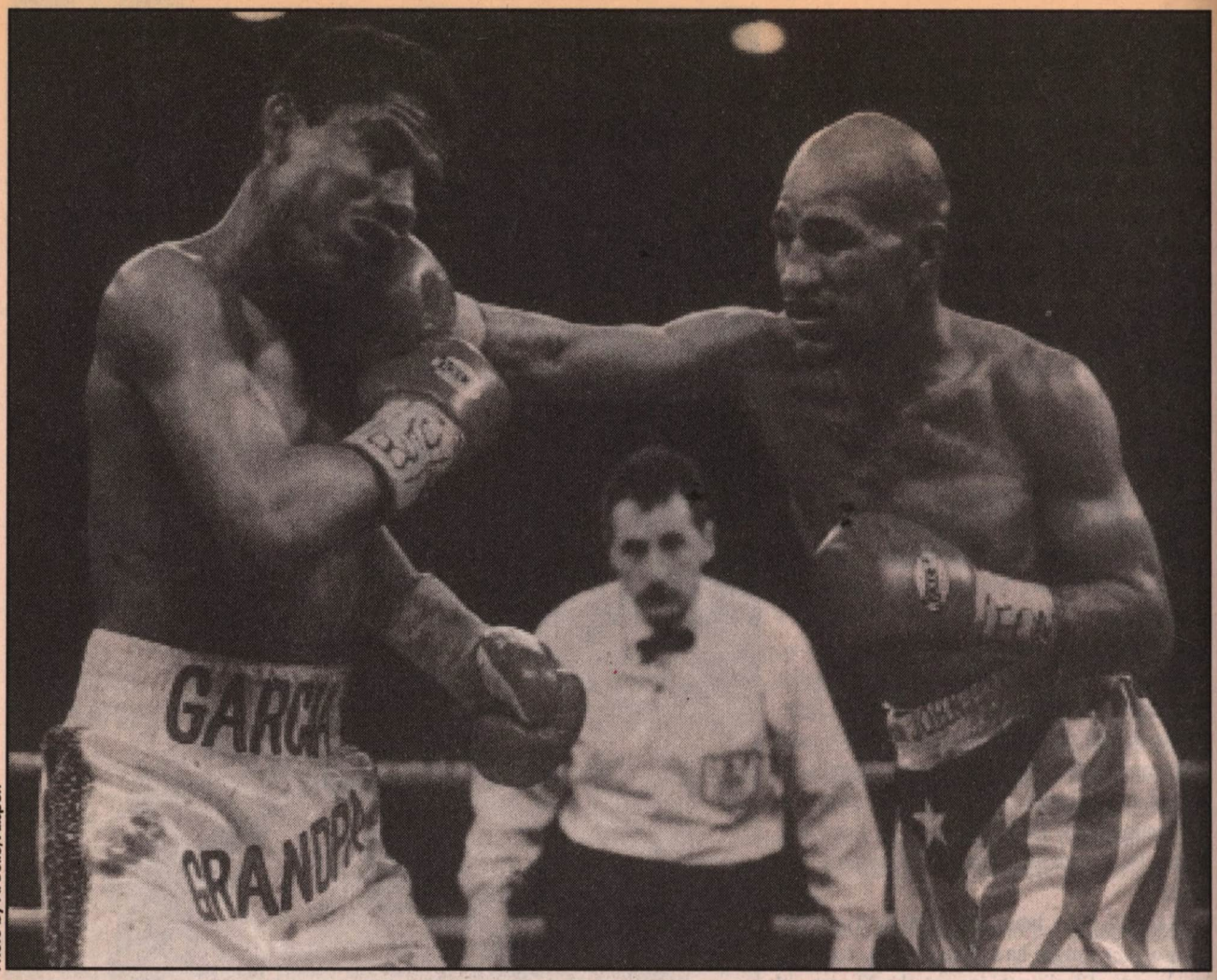

Photo by Al Bello/Allsport

Molina rocks Garcia with a right, but "Grandpa" would hold on to win

ding toward a neutral corner. The unbeaten Garcia, 129½, Oxnard, California, had no trouble beating the count of referee Mitch Halpern (USA), but he continued to absorb combinations to the head and body from Molina, 33, as the rivals fought on the inside. But Garcia came back and caught the two-time former IBF 130-pound ruler with a left-right, and despite throwing a low blow that nearly caused him to lose a point, had no trouble lasting until the final bell.

Top Rank's Bob Arum was at ringside, and had to be impressed with the accuracy and power Garcia laid on the well-travelled Molina, who took Oscar De La Hoya 12 hard rounds in 1995. Garcia, scoring with four- and five-punch salvos, came out of the third round with a cut on the outside of his right eye. But it was not a factor in the result, as he fought through that gash, as well as a left eye that was closing fast in the late rounds.

Garcia, landing heavily to the head and body, swept the second through the eighth rounds. He stunned Molina in the fifth and sixth with painful continuity, but the rugged Latino was never close to going down.

From the 10th through 12th rounds, Molina, displaying superb stamina and desire, gave as good as he got. He was in and out with the jab, and when the war was in the trenches, the challenger had a slight edge in the hot exchanges.

Garcia drew unanimous 115-112 ballots from judges Chuck Giampa (USA), Ruben Garcia (USA), and Steve Weisfield (USA). THE RING's tab was 116-113 for Garcia.

Garcia, 32-0 (24), earned $200,000, the largest purse of his career. But the return will be much larger if Arum finds a date to match him with the undefeated 21-year-old Mayweather.

"It was a great fight," Garcia said afterward. "Molina is a warrior; he's a gamer. Look at his record, and you know Molina always comes to fight. He caught me with some good punches, but I was never hurt.

"Molina did say I hit him low. I'm not sure about that. I know I didn't mean to do it. I think he tried to get me disqualified. Molina hit me low during the entire fight, but I didn't complain, did I?"

Molina, picking up $70,000 for his strong effort, rebounded impressively in his first start since losing to IBF lightweight champion Shane Mosley on an eight-round TKO last May in Atlantic City.

"I felt like I was throwing more punches," Molina, 45-6 (30), complained. "I knocked Garcia down in the 12th round. Look at Garcia's face and then look at my face, and you'll know who won this fight."

Promoter: America Presents
Television: SET
(1-16-99)
Jack Welsh

David Tua KO 10
Hasim Rahman

Miami, Florida: Baltimore heavyweight Rahman knew the secret of how to beat Tua. Heck, everybody did. All he had to do was stay away from the Samoan slugger's murderous left hook. And for most of the first nine rounds of their scheduled 12-rounder at Miccosukee Indian Gaming, Rahman did exactly that, circling to his left, away his opponent's powershots. But when a frustrated Tua unleashed a thunderous left hook after the bell rang to end the ninth round, it ruined Rahman's plan, erased the lead he'd built on the official scorecards, and created a highly controversial ending.

Rahman, 234, swept the first six rounds on THE RING's scorecard. His jab and lateral movement kept Tua, 224½, off-stride and missing badly. "The Rock" augmented his steady flow of point-scoring straight lefts with an occasional right, and for the most part he resisted the urge to mix it up. But even when Tua succeeded in working his way inside, he spent more time clinching and wrestling than throwing punches.

Tua started to come on a bit in the seventh, landing a few good hooks during the early going. But Rahman, although showing signs of fatigue, had regained control by the end of the round, and also took the eighth.

Tua was coming on at the end of the ninth, and had Rahman on the ropes and under heavy fire when the bell sounded. But instead of backing off, Tua couldn't resist firing one more hook. The punch, the best of the fight, caught Rahman flush on the chin. Referee Telis Assimenios jumped between the fighters before Tua could do any more damage, but Rahman looked like a man stepping in holes as he lurched back to his corner.

It was at this point that Tua's trainer, Lou Duva, charged into the ring and threw one of his trademark temper tantrums, shrewdly diverting attention away from his man's flagrant foul. Although Rahman's corner later claimed they had asked Assimenios for extra time for the dazed fighter to recover, time he unquestionably deserved, they must have done so in a very inconspicuous manner, as none of the ringside press saw them do so, and replays also failed to show any such request.

Rahman still appeared groggy when he came out for the 10th, and Tua wasted no time in taking advantage of the situation. He climbed all over Rahman, knocked him into the ropes, and opened up with everything he had. Several wicked hooks thudded into Rahman's head and body, but he was still clear-eyed and ducking under most of Tua's barrage when Assimenios stepped in and stopped the fight 35 seconds into the round.

"I was fine," insisted Rahman, 29-1 (24). "I was ducking and moving and returning punches. This is bull____. I've got 29 wins now, and one robbery."

"It was a railroad job," raged Rahman's co-manager Robert Mittleman. "The punch that hurt Rock was at least two seconds after the bell."

"It was a travesty of justice," agreed Steve Nelson, Rahman's other co-manager. "That's why we are filling a complaint with the IBF." (The bout was for something called the IBF Intercontinental title.)

"That was very bad refereeing," said HBO Sports Vice President Lou DiBella. "Rahman has a right to feel cheated."

Tua, 33-1 (28), saw things in a different light.

"I knew I had him hurt and I knew I was going to beat him," said Tua. "He started to slow down when I started to go to the body."

Said Assimenios: "Rock was on the ropes. He could not defend himself. He took seven or eight blows to the face. At that point, I decided to end the fight."

Official scores after nine rounds: 87-84 and 89-82 (twice), all in favor of Rahman.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(12-19-98)

Nigel Collins

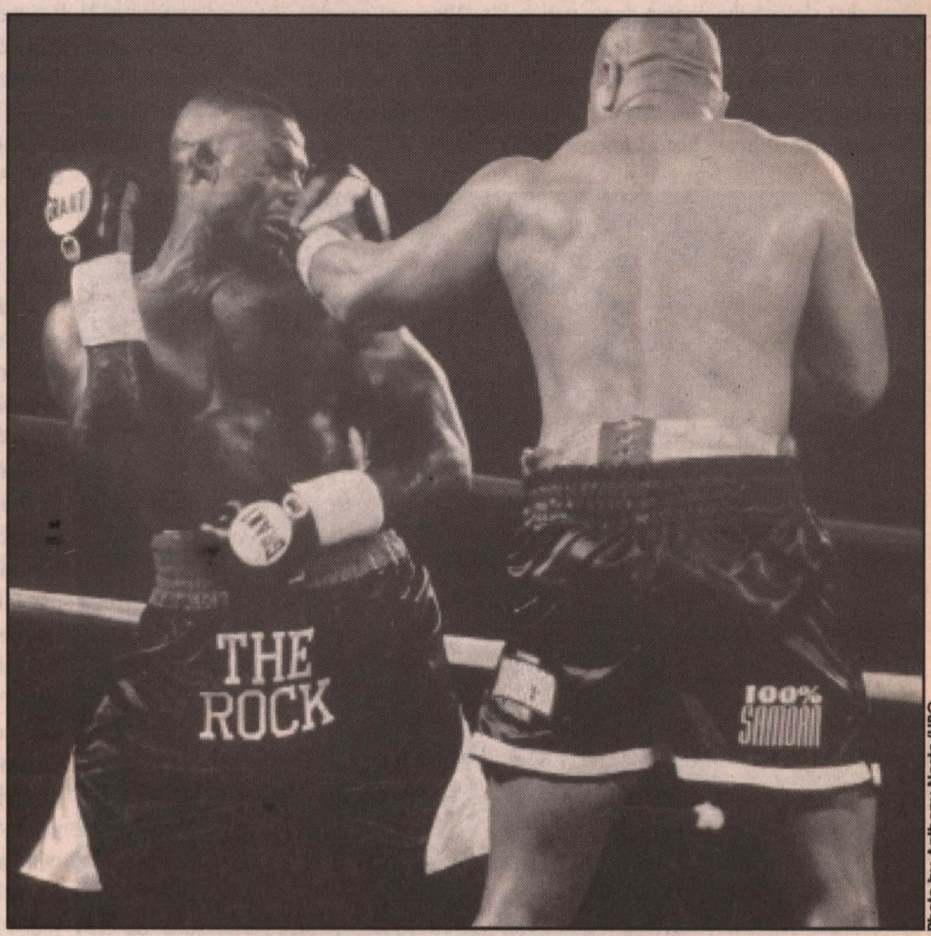

Photo by Anthony Neste/HBO

Tua's left hook after the bell started Rahman's downfall

Veerapol Sahaprom KO 6 Joichiro Tatsuyoshi

Osaka, Japan: Underestimated Thailander Veerapol (who also goes by the name Veerapol Nakornluang-Promotion), 118, stunned the crowd of 9,300 at Osaka Central Gymnasium as he displayed his astounding strength and skill in flattening defending champ Tatsuyoshi, 118, at 2:52 of the sixth round to capture the WBC bantam throne.

Tatsuyoshi, 28, was a prefight favorite because of his greater experience against name opponents such as Greg Richardson, Victor Rabanales, Daniel Zaragoza, and Sirimingkol Singmanassuk. The Japanese star was making his third defense, and he started busily, jabbing the cautious Thailander in the opening canto. Veerapol, with his high and tight guard, covered up and scored with a single counter right, but it was Tatsuyoshi's round.

The champ followed the same pattern and continued to outjab and outspeed the flat-footed Veerapol, 30, in the second. But the battle began to turn in the third. Tatsuyoshi maintained the pressure on his shorter opponent with incessant jabs. Veerapol, however, often landed countering rights that bewildered the champ.

The fourth saw Veerapol begin to throw accurate and effective jabs. Tatsuyoshi kept jabbing and moving, but Veerapol occasionally caught him with accurate right-left combinations that left the champion bleeding from the nose. In the fifth, Veerapol turned more aggressive and stalked the fading Tatsuyoshi, nailing him with accurate combinations to the face and midsection.

In the sixth, the powerful challenger connected with effective shots that slowed the champ down noticeably. Veerapol caught him with a solid jab and a vicious right, sending Tatsuyoshi sprawling to the deck. He beat the count, but Veerapol accelerated his attack and landed a fusillade of punches. Another solid right to the face crashed home just as referee Chuck Hassett (USA) was stepping in to declare a stoppage. Tatsuyoshi collapsed to the canvas and stayed there for several minutes.

"Veerapol was by far stronger than I tonight," said the badly beaten Tatsuyoshi, 17-5-1 (12). "I want a rematch to win back my belt." The newly crowned Veerapol, 21-1 (15), commented, "I knew that Tatsuyoshi would slow down in later rounds, so I started going forward in the sixth. [Stopping him in the sixth] was a bit earlier than my fight plan."

Promoter: Teiken Promotions

(12-29-98)

Joe Koizumi

Will Grigsby W 12 Ratanapol Sor Vorapin

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida: Grigsby captured the vacant IBF junior flyweight title by outboxing longtime IBF mini flyweight champion Vorapin over 12 rounds on a Don King-promoted card at the War Memorial Auditorium. In doing so, the native of St. Paul, Minnesota, became the first resident of his home state to win a world boxing title since middleweight Mike O'Dowd in 1917. The title became vacant when Mauricio Pastrana failed to make weight for a title defense earlier in '98. Grigsby was ranked number three by the IBF, and Thailander Vorapin was number two.

Grigsby's trainers, Al Bonani and Dennis Presley, formulated a fight plan that Grigsby closely followed. Said Bonani: "Vorapin's people have always handpicked his opponents, and he's always fought in his home country. We knew he'd be tired coming over here, so we wanted Will to move a lot and frustrate him."

The plan worked to perfection, but the title bout was immediately preceded by a 10-round life-and-death slugfest between Christy Martin and Sumya Anani, and many in the crowd of approximately 600 booed Grigsby's run-and-run-some-more strategy. Vorapin, a southpaw who initiated the action over the first three rounds, clearly was perturbed by Grigsby's refusal to be drawn into a brawl.

That changed in the fourth round, however, when Grigsby, 107¼, began to stand flat-footed and unload combinations. Vorapin, 107¾, won the sixth round, but Grigsby roared back in the next frame when he wobbled the Thai with a left hook to the body followed by a right hand upstairs. Showing plenty of bravado, Vorapin motioned for Grigsby to keep punching in close, but Grigsby patiently contested the bout on his own terms. Vorapin became so unnerved in the eighth round that he wrestled Grigsby to the canvas, drawing a warning from referee Bill Connors (USA).

Grigsby, 28, piled up points in the ninth, repeatedly stinging Vorapin, 25, with jabs and left hooks as the former 105-pound champion rushed in. Vorapin's best round was the 10th, but Grigsby swept the championship rounds with blistering com-

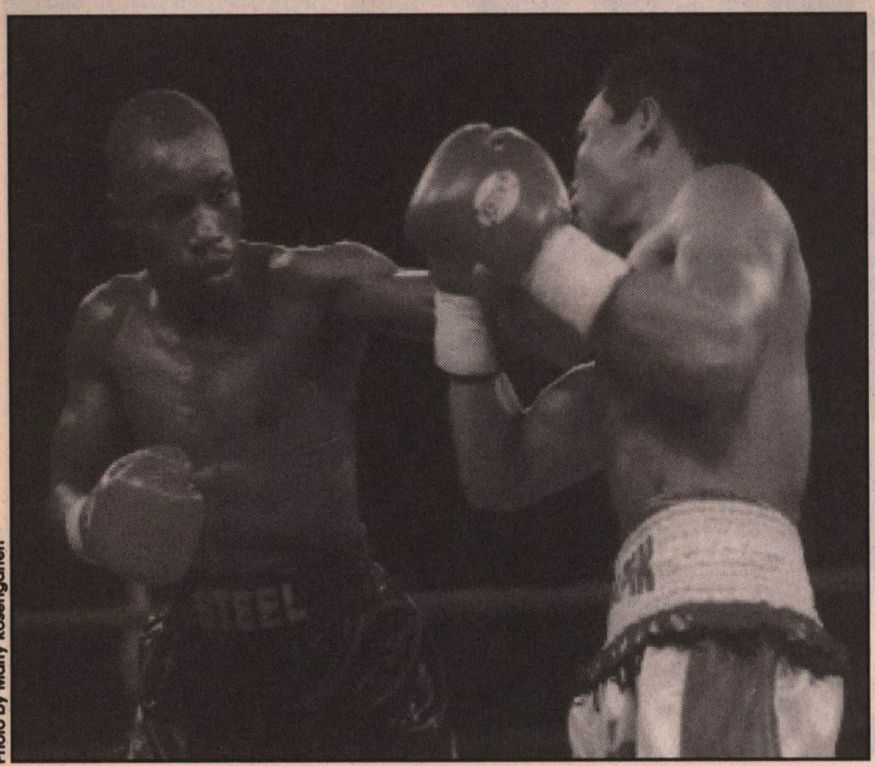

Photo by Marty Rosengarten

Grigsby patiently outboxed Vorapin to bring the title home to Minnesota

bination punching, even when retreating. Vorapin was beaten, but he continued posturing till the final bell. At one point in the final round, after Grigsby tagged him with a pair of lead right hands to the head, Vorapin stood still and urged Grigsby to come at him again. Grigsby stood motionless until referee Connors instructed them to resume fighting. The announcement of the final scores was a mere formality. Judge Bill Ray (USA) scored the bout 118-110, C.D. Jenkins (USA) had it 118-111, and Vaughn LaPrade (USA) carded the fight 116-112.

Grigsby, 13-1-1 (6), was beaming in the dressing room following the fight. "It's a dream come true," he said. "We had a plan and stuck with it. When I saw that he was frustrated because he couldn't hit me, I decided to sit down on my punches and start fighting. I didn't want to get too wild with him because I knew that he had a good wide left hand." Grigsby's only loss was a four-round decision to Michael Carbajal in 1989.

Vorapin, 37-4-1 (29), made 17 successful defenses of the mini flyweight title he won in December 1992. He lost the belt when he was knocked out in four rounds by Zolani Petelo in December 1997.

Television: USSB

(12-18-98)

Ken Knox

Rojas, landing a left hand, took advantage of Iida's shoulder injury

Jesus Rojas W 12 Satoshi Iida

Nagoya, Japan: Venezuelan veteran "Kiki" Rojas, 114¾, captured the WBA junior bantamweight title when he was awarded an upset unanimous decision over Iida, 115, Japan, after 12 heats at Aichi Prefectural Gymnasium. Some 6,600 partisan fans were in attendance, but they watched gloomily as Iida's dislocated right shoulder forced him to fight virtually one-handed from the second round forward.

Iida, making his third defense, was a prefight favorite due to his superior physique, speed, and age (27, as compared to 34 for Rojas). In the opening session, Iida, a tall lefty, cautiously kept his distance, while Rojas occasionally connected with good jabs to the champ's face. Iida landed right-left combos to the midsection and appeared to have an edge in the second.

"I felt that my right shoulder might have been dislocated in the second, so I became very nervous in throwing right jabs and hooks after that," Iida, 25-2-1 (11), disclosed after the fight.

The defending champ looked defensive and negative, losing the third and fourth. Midway through the 5th, Iida almost turned his back, which had the crowd befuddled. Referee Armando Garcia (USA) temporarily stopped the proceedings and asked the champ whether he wanted to go on. Iida nodded in the affirmative, and when the fight resumed, Rojas swarmed over the clearly disadvantaged champ.

Iida, however, showed his best in round six, when he desperately turned loose and pinned Rojas on the ropes with a flurry of punches. In the same round, Rojas was penalized a point for hitting low after receiving the third man's warning.

It became a strange fight from the seventh on. The champ, fighting through severe pain, had to rely almost exclusively on his left hand. Rojas, who had a brief reign as WBA fly champ nine years earlier, took the initiative and stalked the retreating champ. Iida fought well considering his situation, though most in attendance were confused and unaware of his injury. The partisan crowd encouraged the champ, but it was apparent that he was losing the fight.

In the 12th, Rojas committed another low blow and was penalized again. But it didn't make a difference, as Rojas, 32-7-2 (16) with 1 no-contest, won unanimously by scores of 115-111 from Duane Ford (USA), 116-112 from Hector Hernandez (Mexico), and 116-113 from Arkom Wannasit (Thailand).

Promoters: Midori Promotions, Teiken Promotions

(12-23-98)

Joe Koizumi

In Joo Cho W 12 Joel Luna Zarate

Seoul, Korea: Unbeaten Korean speedster Cho, 115, turned in a lackluster performance, but managed to retain the WBC super flyweight title on a hairline majority decision over Mexican Zarate, 114½, over 12 dull rounds. Some 1,000 spectators were in attendance at the ballroom of the Ritz Carlton Hotel, but they were more disgusted than delighted at Cho's negative showing. The scores were as follows: Noppharat Sricharoen (Thailand) and Takeaki Kanaya (Japan) had it 115-114 and 116-112, respectively, both for Cho, while Richard Flaherty (USA) scored it 114-114.

Cho had captured the title on an upset verdict over Filipino lefty Gerry Penalosa at the same hotel last August, while Mexican veteran Zarate had fought to a technical draw with Penalosa in his mandatory shot in Manila last April. So, as recommended by the

WBC, Cho, in his first defense, inherited Penalosa's mandatory obligation.

The 29-year-old Cho, normally an upright stylist with fast footwork, didn't move so much in the first two rounds, probably because he was severely castigated as "marathon champ" by the Korean press after his dull, defensive triumph over Penalosa. The champion did, however, score some good left-right combos to take the first and second sessions.

In the third, Zarate, 33, twice scored with looping left hooks to befuddle Cho, but the Korean kept his distance and occasionally scored with quick one-twos. The Mexican kept coming forward, but failed to catch the elusive champ. Cho seemingly dominated the fourth through seventh rounds with his hit-and-run tactics.

But Cho, 14-0 (6), inexplicably resorted exclusively to repeated clinching and holding in the last four rounds. He seldom threw punches at his slow but game target, and every time Zarate, 32-3-2 (25), got inside, Cho clinched. By the end it had become a close affair, as Cho's sudden loss of his machismo nearly wasted away his previous accumulation of points. It was the least spectacular title bout held in Korea in recent memory.

The referee was Tony Perez (USA).

Promoter: Poongsan Promotions

(1-10-99)

Joe Koizumi

Thomas Tate KO 10 Merqui Sosa

Las Vegas, Nevada: In what was an authentic alley brawl from bell to bell, Tate, 166, Detroit, Michigan, finally drew a warm embrace from Lady Luck after two major disappointments on past visits to Las Vegas, knocking out Merqui Sosa, 168, Brooklyn, New York, at 2:30 of the 10th round in a 12-round main event at the Orleans hotel-casino. A capacity crowd of 1,951 watched Tate retain the NABF super middleweight title when he stretched the veteran Sosa flat on his back at mid-ring with a right to the temple. Referee Mitch Halpern halted his count at six when it was obvious Sosa would not be able to rise before 10.

Tate, 33, finally got the Las Vegas monkey off his back with this dramatic win that improved his record to 36-5 (26) and solidified his status as the IBF's number-one 168-pound contender. Equally important for Tate was atoning for local losses in title bids. The first was a 12-round decision loss to then-WBC middleweight champion Julian Jackson in '92, followed by a two-round blowout in '94 at the hands of then-IBF middleweight champion Roy Jones.

Sosa, 33, originally from the Dominican Republic, generated lively exchanges to win rounds one and two. Tate picked up an eye cut in the third round, but it didn't impair his assault. He worked well behind a steady jab, while Sosa was doing his best work digging to the body.

Tate trapped Sosa on the ropes with an unbroken blitz of 20 punches to the head and body in the fourth round. Bobbing and weaving helped the rugged Dominican survive the torrent after being down once in a corner, and before the bell, he caught Tate with two snapping combinations to the head.

Tate's accuracy served him well in the exchanges, while Sosa was erratic, lunging off-balance and flailing with his jab. Sosa opened the seventh round with four rights to the head, but Tate kept his cool, working his determined opponent to center ring, where he dropped him to one knee with a short right.

Despite the pounding he was absorbing, Sosa came back to take the eighth and ninth rounds, working inside with some mean rights to the head and body. At the end of nine rounds, the verdict was still up for grabs. Despite Sosa being down twice, judge Art Lurie had it even, 85-85, while Rex Walker and Al Siciliano both had Tate slightly ahead by tallies of 85-83 and 85-84, respectively.

Tate, sensing the voting might be close, went out in the 10th round and caught Sosa with an eight-punch salvo. Next was a left-right-left and two short uppercuts. Sosa couldn't find an avenue to escape, and Tate's last right of the night finished the job.

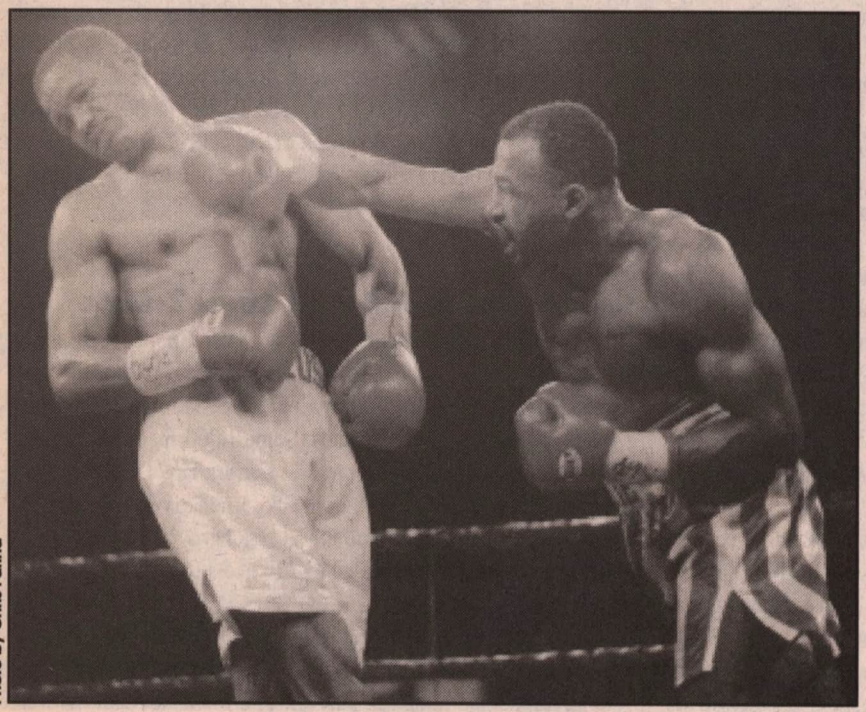

Photo by Chris Farina

Tate finishes Sosa off with a looping right

Tate, who earned $20,000, was happy to return to Las Vegas on a winning note.

"It was like I was written off for a long time. But I have clawed my way back from the dungeon," said the Motor City fighter who is also rated number three by the WBA and number five by the WBC. "Sosa hit me with some good punches, but I had a feeling he was fading. He's a very tough guy, but I persevered. I know I hurt him a lot with those right hands."

Sosa, 33-8-2 (26), who earned $9,400, had an edge in the punching stats, according to CompuBox. Sosa was accurate with 243 of 544 punches for 45 percent, while Tate only connected on 157 of 718 punches for 22 percent.

Television: ESPN2

Promoter: Tony Trudnich

(1-15-99)

Jack Welsh ■

Mandatory Junk

(Continued from page 37)

ing? DiBella said immediately after the fight that his network would not broadcast a WBA mandatory between Jones and Dario Matteoni, and would appeal to both the WBA and, if necessary, Jones to try to block the fight.

But HBO Sports CEO Seth Abraham spoke with a cooler head several days later, supporting DiBella's efforts to try to persuade the WBA to relent, but admitting that if Jones chooses to go forward with the fight, his company has no choice but to televise it.

"We're trying a two-pronged approach," Abraham said. "We're trying to convince the WBA that after this fiasco, it does no good to try and force their version of Rick Frazier on the public.

"We've also had many conversations with Roy and Murad [Muhammad, Jones' promoter] telling them that Roy's value to HBO doesn't depend on title belts. We're not encouraging Roy to give up the belts, because we don't feel that's our place, but if he did, his deal with HBO would not change. If he gives up the belt, he would get the same money to fight on HBO as he got before. If he won't give up the belt and the WBA forces a mandatory on him next, we would televise the fight because when we signed Roy Jones, we signed on for the whole package.

"We are encouraging him not to fight Matteoni next because these organizations force guys like Roy and Oscar De La Hoya and Shane Mosley to run an embarrassing gauntlet to keep their titles. But if it can't be avoided, I'll wince again and we'll do it."

While some argue it is networks like HBO and Showtime who could stop this charade of number-one pretenders ending up with title shots by simply refusing to broadcast the bouts, they sign contracts with top fighters like Jones or Evander Holyfield that cover their title defenses. Although they have some refusal rights, when it comes to mandatory challengers, neither the champions nor their networks can do much other than what Jones did to Frazier—get it over with as quickly as possible.

"We've been forced into some of the same type of fights," said Jay Larkin, executive producer of Showtime Boxing. "There isn't much you can do once you sign a fighter, because as a champion you know there will be fights he's forced into that are less than pleasing, but they come as part of the deal. It's unavoidable."

It's unavoidable any way but one, Abraham believes.

"If men of the caliber of Roy Jones, Evander Holyfield, or Oscar De La Hoya would say, 'We're not fighting,' I believe it would start a groundswell. If the networks started paying on competitiveness of fights, not the presence of a title belt, it would be incredibly corrosive for the organizations.

"If Lennox Lewis beats Evander Holyfield and then refuses to fight a Henry Akinwande [the WBA's number-one heavyweight contender] or John Ruiz [number one in the WBC], it wouldn't change our deal with him even if he was stripped of their belts. That's the stand we take supporting our fighters.

"Conversely, Roy is one of our superstars, and it's not our place to tell him he can't fight a mandatory defense because he must fight someone else. People blame the promoters for a lot of this, but Don King or Bob Arum or the rest of the promoters only take advantage of what the organizations let them do. That's why number one on my most wanted list is the alphabets."

They have been number one for a long time now. A lot longer than Rick Frazier was or Dario Matteoni is likely to be. ■

Ron Borges covers boxing for the Boston Globe and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

Tyson-Botha

(Continued from page 42)

end of the first round, Tyson yanks and twists on Botha's left elbow, which leads to an after-the-bell scuffle and the ring being temporarily surrounded by security personnel. When Botha suggests that Tyson had intentionally tried to break his arm, Tyson responds, "That's correct."

The good: "There's not a racist bone in Mike's body," said Botha's manager, Sterling McPherson, who is black, at the postfight press conference.

The bad: Asked what he said during his in-ring verbal exchanges with the trash-talking Botha, Tyson says, "White boy, I'm going to bleeping kill you."

More contradictory stuff: Tyson, so adamant that arrogance is the chief ingredient of his greatness, does an 180-degree shift at other times, giving the impression that he is a misunderstood, overly sensitive child who is more victim than victimizer. "I'm just a baby lamb, a sheep, a fawn for the lions to eat alive," he said. "I haven't died yet, but I feel like I've been to hell."

And if he has known hell on earth, Tyson is ready, more than ready, to discover what lies on the other side of the great divide. In a fatalistic interview with SET/Showtime's Jim Gray following his knockout of Botha, Tyson said, "I'm talking vulgar because I'm angry. I'm just angry. That's just how I express myself. I need respect. You show me respect and stop writing trashy articles about me, then I'll show you respect. I'm a man. I'm not afraid to die. When I die, I'm going to paradise. I'm in a hurry to die."

Pop all the pertinent data into a blender, hit the button, and what do you get? A concoction guaranteed to leave fans and officials woozier than Botha was after the right hand landed. Tyson is as unpredictable as the exact landing site of a snowflake fluttering to earth, as volatile as an active volcano.

When you consider that Tyson, already on probationary thin ice, is skating toward the center of a nearly thawed-out lake, his indecipherable words and actions can mean only one thing.

Expect nothing, and fear everything. ■

Bernard Fernandez is the 1998 recipient of the Nat Fleischer Award for excellent in boxing journalism and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Stopped Too Soon

(Continued from page 27)

a lot of money. And people pay good money to see them. This is not the amateurs. A guy is going to get in a tough spot sometimes, and you have to give him a chance to get out of it. It's terrible for the sport. The paying public pays to see a fight, and one guy takes a couple good punches and it's over."

Clancy knows what can happen when a fight goes on too long. He was in Emile

(Continued on page 59)

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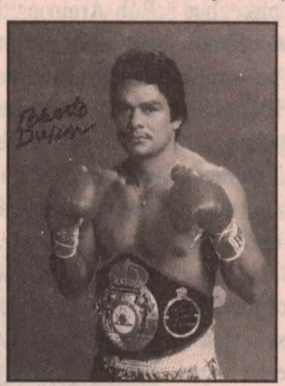

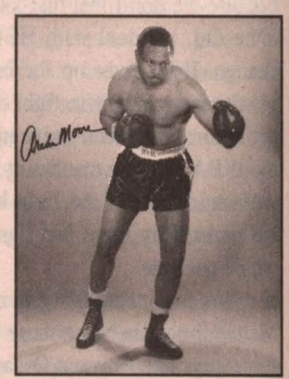

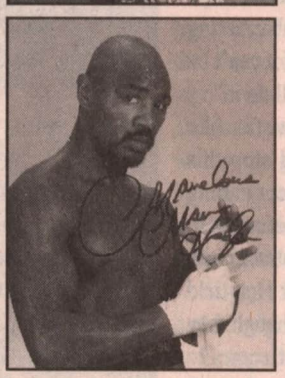

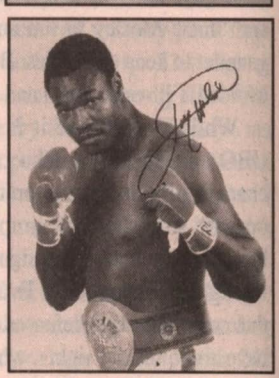

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Stopped Too Soon

(Continued from page 57)

Griffith's corner in 1962 when Griffith's knockout of rival Benny Paret resulted in Paret's death 10 days later, but he blames no one.

"I completely absolved [referee] Rudy Goldstein years ago," Clancy said. "In those days, most Latin fighters, including Benny, would let a guy flurry for a while and then flurry back. Emile hit him with 17 punches in five seconds. If Goldstein had stopped it [sooner], the Latinos in the audience would have gone crazy, saying Paret was faking it."

Still, if fights are being stopped faster than they once were, perhaps it's the result of several higher-profile fatalities and serious injuries in recent years, such as those suffered by Jimmy Garcia and Gerald McClellan. Indeed, when a death occurs in the ring, a rash of quick stoppages are guaranteed to follow.

On November 23, 1979, rising middleweight slugger Wilford Scypion brutally stopped journeyman Willie Classen in New York. When Classen later died, his history, which included several recent knockout losses, attracted national attention and a call for major reform. In a fight for the WBC welterweight title that took place a mere week later, challenger Sugar Ray Leonard floored Wilfred Benitez in the 15th round. Unhurt, Benitez rose, took a pair of glancing blows and stood by helplessly as referee Carlos Padilla stopped it with just six seconds remaining. Another example: Five months after Duk Koo Kim collapsed and died following his knockout loss to Ray Mancini in July '82, Michael Dokes floored WBA heavyweight champion Mike Weaver in the first round of their rematch in Las Vegas. Weaver rose on steady legs then watched in horror as the bout was stopped without another clean blow being scored.

Not everyone thinks fights are being stopped too soon. "Fights aren't being stopped sooner than they used to be," Nevada boxing commissioner Marc Ratner said. "It seems that way when it happens in a high-profile fight that gets more attention. But it works the other way, too. Some people complained that the Pernell Whitaker-Diobelys Hurtado fight went too long. It goes both ways."

Ratner's point is well-taken. In addition to the Whitaker-Hurtado match—which ended with Hurtado unconscious and hanging through the ropes with Whitaker pounding him while referee Arthur Mercante Jr. stood by transfixed—there are others that come immediately to mind: IBF middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins' January '98 drubbing of former welterweight and junior middleweight champion Simon Brown, during which the faded Brown clearly took more at the end than he had to; Campas' December '97 thrashing of Raul Marquez, which ended with Marquez' face so swollen and battered he was nearly unrecognizable; Kostya Tszyu's August mugging of Rafael Ruelas, which by the time it was stopped by Ruelas' corner had virtually every ringsider yelling for the referee to end it; and, of course, William Joppy's August stoppage of a completely dilapidated Roberto Duran.

There are others, too. Who would have argued—other than Lou Duva—had the January '98 Arturo Gatti-Angel Manfredy fight been stopped sooner than the eighth round when Gatti's left eye was spewing blood like a geyser? Would there have been any outrage had Sharmba Mitchell's title-winning effort over Khalid Rahilou come by TKO rather than decision after Rahilou was floored four times? And wasn't there a point during the second Riddick Bowe-Andrew Golota fight—before the low blows started—when stopping it would have been perfectly reasonable?

Ultimately, the responsibility lies with the referee, who has, according to Ratner, one of the most difficult jobs in all of sports.

"I'm a college football official, and I know that as hard as that is, being a boxing referee is unlike being an official in any other sport. It's a real tough thing. It's the toughest job there is, and the longer they do it, the more they see and the better they know when to get in there. But as long as there is boxing, there will be controversy as to when a referee should stop a fight. Either way it's better to fight another day than to get seriously hurt."

We're right to want an end to the story. It's no more than the old-timers wanted when they watched their heroes. But if we don't always get one, it's all right. No ending is better than a bad one. ■

Terry Norris

(Continued from page 31)

like he's ever been a boxer." But when asked about the last three fights, she conceded, "the second one surprised me, but the third one really shocked me. I had seen him [train] for the fights and he seemed to be back at his best."

Mullings, who was a huge underdog when he fought Norris, was very concerned about his rival after seeing him in the two subsequent fights. He remembers that once he started landing his arsenal of unanswered right hands, they cracked against Norris' skull with sickening thuds, and caused his head to swirl around like a tree branch in a windstorm. Although Norris had a reputation for bouncing back after surprising earlier defeats to Simon Brown and Luis Santana, Mullings couldn't help but think he was contributing greatly to the downfall of a once-great fighter.

"Terry was a great all-around athlete, but I had mentally prepared to fight him for years," said Mullings. "As good as I thought he was, I went into that fight with no fear. I had been working as a sparring partner for Roy Jones, which gave me a great boost. The only reason I didn't take him out earlier was because I was physically and emotionally exhausted from all the hype. It took me until the seventh round to relax. I can't say I got my second wind, because I never really got my first. But once I started landing, he took some brutal shots. I remember landing three unanswered right hands that snapped his head around. That type of beating is tough to come back from for anybody, even a great fighter like Terry Norris."

Mullings was also well aware of Norris' fearsome gym reputation, where he would often box 10-12 rounds a day with the toughest of sparring partners.

"That takes a toll," said Mullings. "I try to minimize my sparring because it causes too much damage. But Terry was always a war-ridden fighter. I hope he is able to enjoy his retirement, but what good is having all those belts, and money, prestige, and honor if you can't enjoy them? I have great respect for Terry's devotion, but the human body can only take so much."

Orlin Sr. thought he saw signs of deterioration in January '97 when tough jour-

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Terry Norris

(Continued from page 59)

neyman Nick Rupa lasted until the 10th round before Norris finally put him away. And that was three fights prior to the Mullings match.

"He definitely slipped a bit and didn't go out and knock Rupa out like he could have," Orlin Sr. said. "He shook him enough, but didn't have the zip to finish him. In the old days, if Terry had you in trouble, he would take you out. I saw him slipping, but overlooked it because he was still working so hard."

Around the time of the Rupa fight, Norris was also going through a great deal of personal conflict. He was embroiled in a nasty legal battle with promoter Don King and manager Joe Sayotovich. The Rupa fight would actually be the end of his association with both of them. Adding to Norris' woes was a horrific land development deal that he had gotten into with Sayotovich in Branson, Missouri. When a slew of lawsuits were brought forth by creditors and customers, Norris realized he was the guarantor on a huge loan. To top it off, the fighter was going through marital problems with his wife, Kelly, that would soon lead to a heartbreaking separation. Kelly and the couple's two children now live in Atlanta, while Norris still resides in the beautiful home they once so happily shared in the San Diego area.

"Terry felt a sense of betrayal from everybody," said Woodworth. "He still has trouble trusting me, and I've been associated with him as a friend and manager for years. By the time he fought Mullings, there were lawyers calling every day. The De La Hoya fight would have been helpful not just from a financial standpoint, but it would have kept him focused on fighting rather than all the other problems. As dedicated as he always was, I don't think he was able to help himself from looking ahead to De La Hoya."

Woodworth and Orlin Jr. agree that the emotional drain might have taken its toll on the fighter.

"Your mind burns up just as much energy as the physical," Orlin Jr. said. "People said if Terry got all this stuff out of his mind, he would be okay. But he had 25 world title fights and was sparring 12 rounds a day. He was like a candle wick that just burned out."

Orlin Sr., however, isn't so sure how much the business and legal hassles contributed to his son's decline.

"Terry was used to dealing with problems with Don and Joe," said Orlin Sr. "I just think he had too many tough fights. Most guys don't have as many fights in a career as he's had title fights. A few years ago, he would have knocked out Boudouani or Rosenblatt easily. But he's an old 31 now. Your body can only take so much wear and tear."

Top Rank matchmaker Bruce Trampler said that the events of the last year could not necessarily be foreseen, but are certainly part of a familiar pattern.

"Mullings was a very winnable tuneup fight that backfired," Trampler explained. "It was like an actor turning down a role that could have made him a star, but instead made him look like a schmuck. If you look at Terry's situation, it's really not happy, and it's really not sad. It's typical. In this game, winners invariably go out losers, and usually lose five or six in a row. Terry has only lost three in a row. If a baseball player retires hitting .220, nobody says he was a bum. But a fighter never retires until he has to. It's the nature of boxers, and the nature of the business. The end is always the same."

Norris has established a relationship with a company representing athletes, and will probably work with prospective clients in a recruiting capacity. While those close to him think he is perfectly suited for the role, Rosenblatt, who is as articulate an athlete as you will find in any sport, is not so certain Norris will find much success in that vocation.

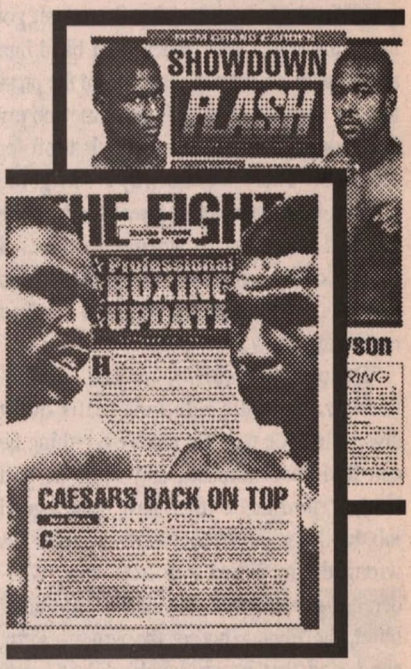
"I don't know how well-situated he is to deal with life after boxing," said Rosenblatt. "Sadly enough, I think it is likely we will see him in the ring again."

Orlin Sr. has been around long enough to know that is likely, but said he will do everything in his power to preclude it from happening. Asked what he would do if his son insisted on a comeback a year or two down the road, his answer was quick and unequivocal.

"I would have to support him and be with him for the fight," he said. "We've been together a long time, and been through too much for me to ever walk away from him." ■

Robert Mladinich is a freelance writer based in New York City and a regular contributor to this magazine.

Worldwide guide to pro boxing



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Pazmania

(Continued from page 34)

Foreman's crusade, the occasional losses haven't sidetracked him for long. The biggest win in the past few years was Pazienza's dramatic fourth-round kayo of previously unbeaten Dana Rosenblatt. But he followed the win with a 15-month layoff, an odd move considering the career boost the spectacular knockout had given him.

"What happened was that Rosenblatt got under my skin," said Pazienza. "I liked him and thought we were friends, but on the press tour, he started saying stuff about me and my fans being ignorant. I trained my butt off for that fight. There was no way I was going home a loser that night. I was ready to be dropped into Iraq. So when it was over, I needed to take some time off and relax. I had fun. I had a ball for over a year, and it helped me, because now I feel great."

Despite his ability to sell tickets, Pazienza's public relations skills don't always include tact. He reads everything he can find about himself, and while he will laud sportswriters he feels have done a good job, he'll also confront a scribe he feels has wronged him. When a Boston writer wondered if steroids were behind Paz' muscular build, the fighter, noting the writer's girth, suggested that he obviously didn't know much about conditioning, which would have been enough, without Paz adding, "You fat f_ _ _."

"I don't understand what some guys have against me," said Pazienza. "I always try my hardest, and fight my butt off out there to give the people a good show. Some people, like [New York *Daily News* communist] Michael Katz, have written that my fans are a bunch of thugs. That's so funny if you know these guys. They're all my age, they're all married, and most of them have two or three kids. The only thug in the whole bunch is me."

The hometown *Providence Journal* takes a decidedly skeptical tone in reporting Pazienza news, which rankles the boxer. It highlighted, for instance, that a few fans booed when the White bout was stopped in the ninth round, even though Paz had administered a frightful shellacking.

"How many times did they want me to hit the guy in the head?" Pazienza asked. "I'd asked the ref to stop it earlier. I said, 'Come on, give the guy a break.' It's not like he had a chance to win."

But regardless of how the media responds, fans are usually solidly in Pazienza's corner. He gets mail from all over the world, and works diligently to answer it all. Before digging into his meal at Pinelli's, he looked sadly at a bulging package someone had sent to Burchfield's office. Inside were at least 50 photos that somebody wanted Paz to autograph.

"I sign stuff all the time for anyone who asks," he said. "But something like this I might pass on. This just looks like someone trying to make a profit on selling these. I might sign one or two, and send them all back. Average fans will always get a reply if I can, and believe me, I spend a lot of time at the post office. I feel I owe it to them if they support me."

Pazienza's generosity is not confined to those who help pay his purses.

"Let me tell you what Vinny did after his last fight, that not many boxers would do," Burchfield said. "When former welterweight champion Tony DeMarco came to the locker room afterward, Vinny asked him, 'Did my performance satisfy you, champ? If you tell me I did okay, I'll know it was a good fight.' He made DeMarco feel 10-feet tall."

At one point during dinner, an acquaintance came over to Paz' table and chatted, and before leaving, said, "You look pretty good for an old guy."

"Can you believe that?" the 36-year-old Pazienza said, grinning. "I find that so funny, and I get it all the time. I feel as young as ever. I know I'm supposed to be all done, fat and slow, but I'm not. I'm fine. I guess I'm genetically lucky, because my dad is 81 and still going strong."

With his on-the-edge lifestyle and a passel of tales about him losing piles of money at casinos coast to coast, Pazienza's finances are a mystery.

"I've lost money in a lot of ways, casinos, stock market, investments," Pazienza said with a shrug. "I've gone through a lot, no doubt, and guys with bad investment ideas just seem to find me. But I'm not concerned with money. To answer the question, I'm fine in that sense. You might see me lose a $10,000 blackjack hand, and just be unaffected. I'm totally the opposite of when I'm in the ring. Boxing fans might expect me to lose a hand like that and jump over the table to throttle the dealer. But outside of the ring I'm an easygoing guy."

But despite good genes, how much longer can Pazienza continue to live the gladiator's life?

"In 1999, I want to fight everyone and anyone, and in 2000 I'll retire and make my movie," Pazienza stated.

He is in fact shopping around a 50-page synopsis of his autobiography. Just before arriving for dinner, he mailed a copy to Max Baer Jr., the ex-actor (Jethro on *Beverly Hillbillies*) and son of the late heavyweight champion, who is currently building a casino in Reno, Nevada. Pazienza was quick to point out that Baer produced *Macon County Line*, which set a record for the highest gross vs. investment back in the 1970s, and said the two had a two-hour telephone conversation about the project.

"I've been offered a TV movie for my story, and I turned it down," said Pazienza. "It's bigger than that, an incredible story."

It's so naturally incredible that Pazienza has already gone through two scriptwriters who suggested spicing up his life story with some fiction.

"One guy wanted me dating Vanessa Williams while I had a broken neck," said Pazienza. "And the other guy suggested we have a female train me, and he had Morgan Fairchild in mind. I told him that Kevin Rooney is a world famous trainer, and that you can't just change him into Morgan Fairchild and expect people to believe it."

Pazienza's acting career has already gained momentum. He had a cameo in the low-budget Boston flick *The North End* and a bigger role in Sly Stallone's *The Good Life*. He also played a cocky boxer in an episode of the television series *Police Academy*.

"I've got a couple of scripts I'm reading now," he said. "But everything's on hold for '99."

Pazienza, who still keeps the first boxing trophy he ever won on his mantle, is the sort of fighter who often eschews safety for the sake of a good brawl. But don't worry, a couple of recent incidents have helped put things into perspective for him. He was shocked by Mike Tyson's showing against Frans Botha, and made it clear that he doesn't want the same thing to happen to him.

"Tyson used to be faster than me," he said. "But that speed was gone against Botha. Mike also looks like he doesn't take a good punch these days. He stops in his tracks. I'm sorry to see it because I knew Mike, and with all his problems, he was always nice to me. He's just being used."

Watching WBA middleweight champion William Joppy demolish Roberto Duran made an even deeper impression.

"After the fight, I saw Roberto at a bar in the casino," revealed Pazienza. "I went over and hugged him. I said, 'Roberto, man, what did you expect? You're 47 years old, and this game wears out guys in their 30s.' I told him he was always one of my heroes, and that his picture is still hanging on my wall at home. And while I'm telling him this, he started crying. I mean, what do you say? It just blew my mind."

Pazienza and Burchfield are determined that he won't suffer the same fate as Duran. Pazienza is scheduled for an April bout at Foxwoods, and Cayton is angling for a title shot this summer at either WBC super middleweight champion Richie Woodhall or IBF titlist Sven Ottke. Burchfield, however, sees another scenario as Pazienza's swan song.

"Vinny has brought a lot of excitement to this game, while conducting himself as a gentleman outside of the ring," Burchfield said. "My dream is that Oscar De La Hoya see a chance to move up in weight and box Vinny, and in that way, Vinny finally gets some of the respect for his ability he deserves."

And if that match ever happens, De La Hoya will meet the only other pug in the world who's as popular with the ladies as he is. ■

Jay Miller is THE RING's New England correspondent.

Jesus Pimentel

(Continued from page 47)

being splashed in bolder and bolder type across sports pages." Even before the Lopez fight, Stanley Weston's magazine had noted that "not since the heyday of Enrique Bolonos have Mexican fans been so excited about a fighter as they are about Jesus Pimentel. And with good reason. A savage puncher and artful boxer, Jesus is the only bantamweight in the world with a chance of dethroning champion Eder Jofre."

Eight challengers had tried and ended up horizontal since the amazing Brazilian had won recognition as 118-pound champion in 1960. Jofre—undefeated in 49 bouts (with three draws) through 1963, and winner of his last 16 fights by knockout—was called a bantamweight Sugar Ray Robinson by no less than THE RING's Fleischer.

The match was made in the late spring 1964. Powerful California promoters Parnassus and Eaton set it up behind the scenes, using local promoter Tony Padilla as their front man in San Antonio, Texas, where the fight was supposed to occur. Pimentel and Kabakoff went there in June and opened up camp where John Wayne filmed his epic movie *The Alamo*. But as the days wore on, tickets for the fight between the South American champion and the Mexican challenger—neither of whom had ever appeared in Texas—weren't moving. There were other troubles, as well. With time running out, "Jofre was about 11 pounds overweight and couldn't make the weight," recalled Kabakoff.

Parnassus went to both camps and announced that he was halving the champion's and challenger's respective purses of $40,000 and $20,000. Recognizing a lost cause when they saw it, Kabakoff and Pimentel headed back to California the day before the fight was officially canceled. Their early departure gave Parnassus an opportunity to deflect the blame for the failed promotion onto them. He said Pimentel was running away from Jofre, blamed him and Kabakoff for the cancellation of the fight, and induced his connections at the WBA to suspend them for a year.

"It was a trap," maintained Kabakoff, whose subsequent effort to get the California attorney general's office interested in the case went nowhere. Parnassus and Eaton are deceased, but Pimentel's and Kabakoff's account of what happened is largely supported by Denkin, although the latter adds that for all his devotion to Pimentel, "Harry was probably the biggest detriment [in his career]. He wouldn't play politics."

Kabakoff concedes as much. "It was my fault [Pimentel] never became bantamweight champion of the world." Pimentel, however, doesn't buy it. "They blame Harry Kabakoff, but it wasn't his fault," he said. "We didn't get the proper chance."

Two years later, in 1966, when Pimentel went back to San Antonio [where he ended up having numerous fights and becoming a local idol], Padilla called a press conference at which he completely exonerated him and Kabakoff of any blame for the cancellation of the Jofre fight. But that came later. With the suspension freezing them out of the big time in '64, the number-one contender returned by necessity to the small Southwestern and Mexican border circuit that had spawned

(Continued on page 65)

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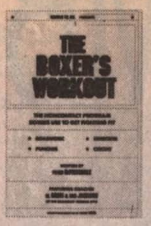

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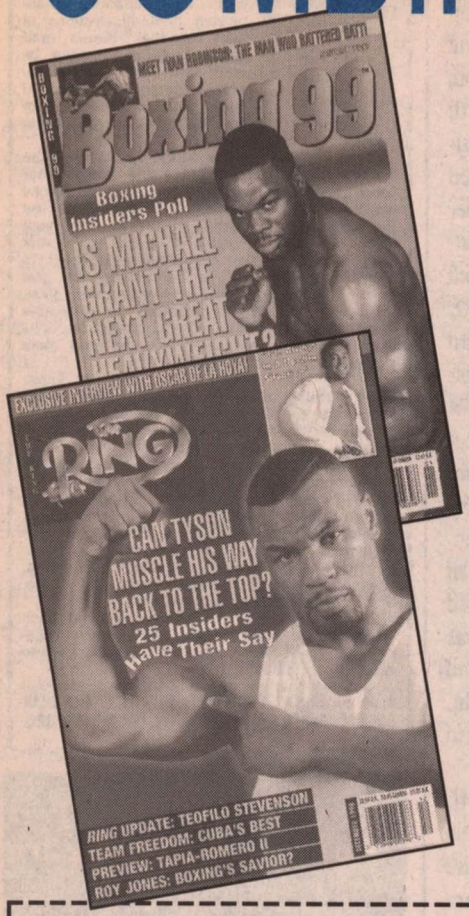

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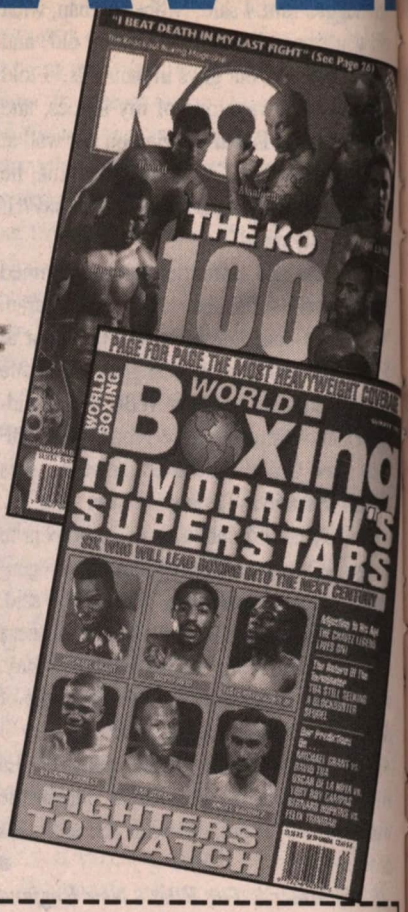

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Jesus Pimentel

(Continued from page 63)

him, keeping busy in what Kabakoff calls the "outlaw places and tank towns, fighting anybody who would stand up to threats of his own suspension for occupying the same ring as Pimentel."

When Pimentel's suspension was finally lifted, he was matched against earlier Jofre victim Joe Medel in Los Angeles on December 6, 1965. Knocked down early, Medel floored Pimentel twice in the ninth and survived a rough 10th round to take a close decision in what was voted by THE RING as the fourth best fight of the year.

"He was the only fighter that hurt me," said Pimentel of Medel. "I got him against the ropes, and tried to avoid mixing it up with him there because that was his speciality. He dropped me with a left hook. I got up, and everything was blurry. When I saw [Medel], he was looking like a bull when a bull is ready to charge." While he questions the verdict, Medel "got his hand raised and that's what counts," said Pimentel.

After 13 knockout wins in his next 14 bouts, Pimentel got a taste of his own medicine before a sellout crowd in the first fight ever held at the L.A. Forum. Jesus "Chucho" Castillo "fought a fight that was poison for me," Pimentel said of the June 14, 1968, match. "He never stopped moving. I could never catch him, and the only time I did, I ended up breaking my hand."

Castillo, who won a 12-round decision, was then the Mexican bantamweight champion, and two years later would stun the boxing world by inflicting the first loss in 60 fights on champion and future Hall of Famer Ruben Olivares.

Badly broken in several places, Pimentel's right hand was surgically repaired, and he returned to the wars.

"I felt like retiring before, but I needed to complete my effort and fight for the title," he said. "Otherwise my career was in vain."

It happened, finally, on December 14, 1971, in his 11th year as a pro, and the opponent at the L.A. Forum was Olivares himself, who'd regained the crown from Castillo earlier that year.

"I knew my best years had passed by," admitted Pimentel. "My reflexes had slowed. I couldn't do it no more. After the 10th round, I came back and said, 'Harry, I don't feel my legs.'"

Kabakoff stopped it in the next round.

"He was 32, and even then he had Olivares hanging on, and split his nose open," said Kabakoff. "And Olivares took so many shots that in his next fight he lost [to Rafael Herrera]."

According to the manager, even Parnassus, who promoted the fight, told reporters afterward that if it had happened two years earlier, Olivares—a Hall of Fame member regarded as one of the greatest bantamweight champions in history—would have bit the dust, not Pimentel. It was Little Poison's final bout.

"I felt disappointed in a way, but happy, too," he said, "because I had fought for the title and tried my best."

For several years after that, he and Kabakoff promoted fights together in California and Mexicali. Today, Pimentel is a boxing instructor at the Northridge Athletic Club, and is active in a family landscaping and gardening business.

Last October, another item was added to his trophy case. It was the plaque Pimentel received when he was inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame.

"I've had a wonderful life," he said. "Especially my boxing career. I think of the days in the barrio when I was just a nobody. Not that I consider myself a great thing now, but anywhere I go people salute and remember me, and I say to myself it's because I always treated people with respect as a fighter and still do now as a civilian, and they like that. It's the greatest feeling that people still remember and talk about me. It's not money or fame, but that people still respect me."

"He was a gentleman in and out of the ring," said Kabakoff. "Sometimes too much. In 39 years, I've never ever even heard him use a four-letter word."

That in itself probably entitles Little Poison to his own pedestal in ring history, but he'll take the one earned with his fists. The championship would have been nice, too, but as Pimentel said "in the '60s, even to be rated was a great honor." ■

Pete Ehrmann, a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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WORLDWIDE RATINGS

The ratings of the three major governing bodies recognized by The Ring are supplied by the organizations themselves. They are updated on these pages as soon as they are made available to us. In this issue, the WBA ratings were compiled as of November 1998, the WBC as of December1998, and the IBF as of January 1999.

HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Lennox Lewis (GB)	C	–	–
Evander Holyfield (USA)	–	C	C
John Ruiz (USA)	1	2	3
Zeljko Mavrovic (CROA)	2	9	–
Ray Mercer (USA)	3	7	8
David Tua (NZ)	4	–	1
Vitali Klitchko (UKR)	5	8	–
Michael Grant (USA)	6	6	–
Andrew Golota (POL)	7	–	–
Larry Donald (USA)	8	–	4
Axel Schulz (GER)	9	–	–
Shannon Briggs (USA)	10	–	–
Henry Akinwande (GB)	–	1	6
Jade Scott (USA)	25	3	–
Kirk Johnson (CAN)	–	4	11
Oleg Maskaev (UKR)	22	5	–
Mike Tyson (USA)	–	10	–
Francois Botha (SA)	23	–	2
Hasim Rahman (USA)	27	–	5
Vaughn Bean (USA)	–	12	7
Chris Byrd (USA)	14	–	9
Robert Hawkins (USA)	–	–	10

CRUISERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Juan Carlos Gomez (CUBA)	C	–	–
Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)	–	C	–
Arthur Williams (USA)	–	–	C
Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)	1	–	9
Dale Brown (CAN)	2	10	–
Johnny Nelson (GB)	3	–	–
Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)	4	7	7
Ken Murphy (USA)	5	3	4
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	6	–	–
Terry Dunstan (GB)	7	–	8
Saul Montana (MEX)	8	1	1
Alexei Ilin (RUS)	9	–	–
Bruce Scott (GB)	10	–	–
Robert Daniels (USA)	19	2	–
Nate Miller (USA)	–	4	–
Stefan Anghern (SWI)	–	5	–
Valery Vikhor (LAT)	24	6	–
Ezequiel Paixao (BRA)	–	8	–
Bruce Scott (GB)	–	9	–
Vacant	–	–	2
Stefan Anghem (SWI)	–	–	3
Imamu Mayfield (USA)	16	11	5
Ramon Garbey (CUB)	13	–	6
Andre Purlette (GUY)	18	–	10

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Roy Jones (USA)	C	C	–
Reggie Johnson (USA)	–	–	C
Richard Frazier (USA)	1	3	–
Montell Griffin (USA)	2	–	–
Derrick Harmon (USA)	3	9	9
Michael Nunn (USA)	4	–	–
Crawford Ashley (GB)	5	4	2
Henry Wharton (GB)	6	–	–
Lou Del Valle (USA)	7	5	4
Hisashi Teraji (JAP)	8	–	–
Muhammad Siluvangi (ZAI)	9	–	8
David Telesco (USA)	10	7	5
Dario Matteoni (ARG)	–	1	–
Richard Hall (USA)	–	2	–
Anthony Bigeni (AUS)	–	6	–
Eric Harding (USA)	15	8	–
Lincoln Carter (USA)	–	10	10
Vacant	–	–	1
Will Taylor (USA)	18	–	3
Antonio Tarver (USA)	22	–	6
Mark Prince (GB)	–	–	7

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Richie Woodhall (GB)	C	–	–
Frank Liles (USA)	–	C	–
Sven Ottke (GER)	–	–	C
Vincenzo Nardiello (ITA)	1	–	–
Glenn Catley (GB)	2	–	–
Eric Lucas (CAN)	3	5	–
Thomas Tate (USA)	4	3	1
Dean Francis (GB)	5	–	–
Robin Reid (GB)	6	–	11
Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)	7	10	3
David Starie (GB)	8	7	8
Bruno Girard (FRA)	9	1	–
Chris Johnson (CAN)	10	9	–
Byron Mitchell (USA)	12	2	4
Jorge Castro (ARG)	–	4	–
Mads Larsen (DEN)	17	6	–
Andrei Shkalikov (RUS)	–	8	9
Charles Brewer (USA)	–	–	2
Rick Thornberry (AUST)	28	–	5
Antoine Byrd (USA)	–	–	6
Giovanni Nardiello (ITA)	20	–	7
Dean Francis (GB)	–	–	10

MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Hassine Cherifi (FRA)	C	–	–
William Joppy (USA)	–	C	–
Bernard Hopkins (USA)	–	–	C
Robert McCracken (GB)	1	7	3
Antwun Echols (USA)	2	–	–
Stephane Ouelette (CAN)	3	–	–
Keith Holmes (USA)	4	4	6
Kevin Palmer (USA)	5	–	–
Winky Wright (USA)	6	6	–
Giovanni Pretorius (SA)	7	8	4
Agostino Cardamone (ITA)	8	9	–
Ali Ennebati (FRA)	9	11	–
Julio Cesar Vazquez (ARG)	10	–	–
Darren Obah (AUSTRL)	–	1	–
Julio Cesar Green (DR)	12	2	7
Rito Ruvalcaba (MEX)	–	3	–
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	5	–
Ramon Moyano (ARG)	27	10	–
Robert Allen (USA)	–	–	1
Antwun Echols (USA)	–	–	2
Anthony Andrews (GUY)	–	–	5
Brian Barbosa (USA)	23	–	8
Peter Venancio (BRA)	–	–	9
Lansana Djallo (JUI)	–	–	10

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Keith Mullings (USA)	C	–	–
Laurent Boudouani (FRA)	–	C	–
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	–	C
Javier Castillejo (SPA)	1	7	10
Tony Marshall (USA)	2	4	–
David Reid (USA)	3	6	7
Davide Ciarlante (ITA)	4	–	–
Mamadou Thiam (FRA)	5	3	–
Kookyui Song (KOR)	6	–	–
Raul Marquez (USA)	7	–	4
James Coker (USA)	8	–	–
Kevin Kelly (USA)	9	2	–
Rodney Jones (USA)	10	11	–
Guillermo Jones (PAN)	–	1	–
Emmett Linton (USA)	–	5	9
Fernando Vargas (USA)	–	8	–
Hector Camacho (PR)	–	9	–
Pedro Ortega (MEX)	–	10	–
Vacant	–	–	1
Vacant	–	–	2
Earnie Artango (AUSTRL)	27	–	3
Carl Daniels (USA)	–	–	5
Yory Boy Campas (MEX)	11	–	6
Winky Wright (USA)	–	–	8

WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Oscar De La Hoya (USA)	C	–	–
James Page (USA)	–	C	–
Felix Trinidad (PR)	–	–	C
Derrell Coley (USA)	1	3	5
Ike Quartey (GHA)	2	7	–
Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)	3	5	11
Vernon Forrest (USA)	4	–	4
Nicolas Cervera (COL)	5	–	–
Jose Luis Lopez (MEX)	6	1	–
Maxim Nesterenko (RUS)	7	6	–
Oba Carr (USA)	8	2	8
Daniel Santos (PR)	9	–	12
Frankie Randall (USA)	10	–	–
Frank Olsen (DEN)	16	4	–
Andrei Pestraiev (RUS)	–	8	–
Andrew Lewis (GUY)	19	9	–
Michael Trabant (GERE)	27	10	–
Vincent Pettway (USA)	–	–	1
Hugo Pineda (COL)	–	–	2
Raul Frank (USA)	–	–	3
Mahenge Zulu (ZAI)	–	–	6
Sam Garr (GA)	–	–	7
Antonio Marqurito (MEX)	–	–	9
Michael Covington (USA)	–	–	10

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Vacant	C	–	–
Sharmba Mitchell (USA)	–	C	–
Vince Phillips (USA)	–	–	C
Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)	1	7	–
Julio Cesar Chavez (MEX)	2	8	–
Reggie Green (USA)	3	6	4
Lawrence Ngobeni (SA)	4	–	–
Diobelis Hurtado (CUB)	5	–	–
Rafael Ruelas (MEX)	6	–	–
Khalid Rahilou (FRA)	7	2	–
Zab Judah (USA)	8	9	2
Mauro Lucero (MEX)	9	–	–
Jongkil Kim (KOR)	10	–	–
Virgil McClendon (USA)	–	1	5
Elio Ortiz (VEN)	–	3	12
Juan Coggi (ARG)	–	4	11
Freddy Rojas (CHILE)	21	5	–
Junichi Ono (JAP)	–	10	–
Terron Millett (USA)	–	–	1
Randall Bailey (USA)	–	–	3
Emanuel Burton (USA)	22	–	6
Alex Carillo (COL)	–	–	7
Hector Lopez (MEX)	13	–	8
Fred Pendleton (USA)	–	–	9
Luis Flores (COL)	–	–	10

LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Cesar Bazan (MEX)	C	–	–
Jean-Baptiste Mendy (FRA)	–	C	–
Shane Mosley (USA)	–	–	C
Billy Schwer (GB)	1	3	12
Steve Johnston (USA)	2	–	7
Daomai Sithkodam (THAI)	3	–	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	4	–	–
Genaro Hernandez (USA)	5	–	–
Lovemore Ndou (SA)	6	–	9
Israel Cardona (USA)	7	4	1
Aldo Rios (ARG)	8	12	–
Rick Yoshimura (JAP)	9	6	–
Hiroyuki Sakamoto (JAP)	10	–	–
Alberto Sicurella (ARG)	–	1	–
Orzubek Nazarov (JAP)	–	2	–
Phillip Holiday (SA)	–	5	3
Angel Manfredy (USA)	–	7	–
Eduardo Morales (ARG)	–	8	4
Ivan Robinson (USA)	14	9	2
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	–	10	–
Ben Tackie (GHA)	19	–	5
Luis Villalata (PERU)	–	–	6
Sandro Casamonica (ITA)	17	–	8
Edil Martinez (USA)	–	–	10

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Floyd Mayweather (USA)	C	–	–
Takanori Hatakeyama (JAP)	–	C	–
Robert Garcia (USA)	–	–	C
Jesus Chavez (USA)	1	–	–
Goyo Vargas (MEX)	2	–	–
Justin Juuko (UGA)	3	2	5
Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)	4	–	–
Kengo Nagashima (JAP)	5	10	–
Joel Casamayor (CUB)	6	–	3
Santos Rebolledo (VEN)	7	–	11
Jorge Barrios (ARG)	8	–	–
Angel Manfredy (USA)	9	–	–
Carlos Gerena (PR)	10	8	10
Lakva Sim (MON)	–	1	–
Yong Soo Choi (KOR)	11	3	–
Dennis Holbaek (DEN)	13	4	–
Edson Xuxa Nacimento (BRA)	–	5	–
Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)	–	6	–
Antonio Hernandez (MEX)	–	7	–
Gilbert Serrano (VEN)	–	9	–
Diego Corrales (USA)	–	–	1
Derrick Gainer (USA)	–	–	2
Arnulfo Castillo (USA)	–	–	4
Ramon Ledon (CUBA)	–	–	6
Moises Pedroza (COL)	–	–	7
Jaime Rangel (COL)	–	–	8
Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)	–	–	9

FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Luisito Espinosa (PHIL)	C	–	–
Antonio Cermeno (VEN)	–	C	–
Manuel Medina (MEX)	–	–	C
Cesar Soto (MEX)	1	1	10
Wayne McCullough (IRE)	2	–	–
Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)	3	12	–
Paul Ingle (GB)	4	5	4
Derrick Gainer (USA)	5	–	–
Pablo Chacon (ARG)	6	10	–
Takeo Imaoka (JAP)	7	–	–
Injin Chi (KOR)	8	–	–
Carlos Rios (ARG)	9	–	–
Dramane Nabaloun (BKF)	10	–	–
Fred Norwood (USA)	–	2	–
Frederic Perez (FRA)	–	3	–
Chamopekt Chorchamuang (THAI)	–	4	–
Mbulelo Botile (SA)	–	6	3
Angel Vasquez (PR)	–	7	2
Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)	–	8	–
Victor Polo (COL)	–	9	1
Jesus Chavez (USA)	–	–	5
Hector Lizarraga (USA)	–	–	6
Steve Robinson (GB)	21	–	7
Tony Wehbee (AUS)	17	–	8
Bradford Beasley (USA)	–	–	9

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Erik Morales (MEX)	C	–	–
Enrique Sanchez (MEX)	12	C	–
Vuyani Bungu (SA)	–	–	C
Reynante Jamili (PHIL)	1	10	–
Guty Espadas (MEX)	2	8	–
Michael Brodie (GB)	3	5	4
Ariston Clayton (USA)	4	–	6
Jesus Salud (USA)	5	–	–
Kozo Ishii (JAP)	6	–	–
Sergei Devakov (UKR)	7	–	11
Willie Jorrin (USA)	8	–	–
Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)	9	–	–
Angel Chacon (PR)	10	–	–
John Johnson (USA)	–	1	3
Yobert Ortega (VEN)	–	2	–
Richard Carrillo (VEN)	–	3	–
Hector Acero-Sanchez (DR)	–	4	–
Bugiarso (INDO)	–	6	–
Serge Poilblan (FRA)	–	7	–
Choe Chol Su (KOR)	–	9	–
Victor Llerena (COL)	–	–	1
Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)	13	–	2
Danny Romero (USA)	–	–	5
Salim Medjkoune (FRA)	15	–	7
Jason Pires (USA)	–	–	8
Ernesto Gray (COL)	–	–	9
Anell Barotillo (AUSTRL)	21	–	10

BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)	C	–	–
Nana Konadu (GHA)	14	C	2
Tim Austin (USA)	–	–	C
Adan Vargas (MEX)	1	5	5
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	2	–	–
Paul Ayala (USA)	3	3	–
Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)	4	–	–
Cuauhtemoc Gomez (MEX)	5	7	–
John Michael Johnson (USA)	6	–	–
Hugo Dianzo (MEX)	7	–	–
Gerardo Martinez (MEX)	8	8	–
Sergio Aguila (MEX)	9	–	–
Saul Briceno (MEX)	10	–	–
Sahoiu Sithchai Condo (THAI)	–	1	–
Lukhin CP Gym (THAI)	–	2	–
Johnny Bredahl (DEN)	20	4	–
Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)	–	6	–
Kozo Ishii (KOR)	–	9	–
Giovanni Andrade (BRA)	–	10	–
Jose Mendoza (COL)	–	–	1
Jesus Perez (COL)	27	–	3
Adrian Kaspari (INDO)	–	–	4
Albert Resilay (INDO)	–	–	6
Bernardo Mendoza (CHI)	–	–	7
Cesar Singo (ECU)	–	–	8
Juan Sanchez (COL)	–	–	9
Francisco Espita (USA)	–	–	10

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
In Joo Cho (KOR)	C	–	–
Satoshi Iida (JAP)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Gerry Penalosa (PHIL)	1	–	12
Luis Bolanos (COL)	2	12	–
Joel Luna Zarate (MEX)	3	4	–
Raffy Montalban (PHIL)	4	–	–
Ratanachai Sor Voraphin (THAI)	5	11	2
Akihigo Nago (JAP)	6	10	–
Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)	7	1	–
Jose Rafael Sosa (ARG)	8	–	–
Pone Saengmorokot (THAI)	9	–	–
Keiji Yamaguchi (JAP)	10	–	–
Saen Sow Ploenchit (THAI)	–	2	–
Veeraphol Sahaprom (THAI)	–	3	–
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	5	7
Dario Azuaga (PAR)	–	6	–
Jesus Rojas (VEN)	–	7	–
Felix Machado (VEN)	–	8	11
Takato Toguchi (JAP)	–	9	–
Mark Johnson (USA)	–	–	1
Eric Morel (USA)	12	–	3
Pedro Pena (USA)	22	–	4
Ernesto Briceno (VEN)	–	–	5
Libaniel Alvarez (COL)	–	–	6
Ubadel Soto (COL)	–	–	8
Evangelo Perez (PAN)	–	–	9
Julio Gamboa (NIC)	–	–	10

FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)	C	–	–
Hugo Soto (ARG)	–	C	–
Vacant	–	–	C
Gabriel Mira (MEX)	1	–	–
Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)	2	–	–
David Guerault (FRA)	3	5	1
Alex Ali Baba (GHA)	4	–	–
Oscar Arciniega (MEX)	5	–	–
Alejandro Montiel (MEX)	6	8	–
Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)	7	–	–
Mike Trejo (USA)	8	–	7
Raul Juarez (MEX)	9	–	–
Damaen Kelly (IRE)	10	–	–
Leo Gamez (VEN)	–	1	–
Jose Bonilla (VEN)	–	2	–
Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)	–	3	–
Gilberto Gonzalez (VEN)	–	4	–
Jesper Jensen (DEN)	–	6	–
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	7	–
Carlos Murillo (PAN)	–	9	–
Miguel A. Granados (MEX)	17	10	–
Irene Pacheco (COL)	–	–	2
Ferid Ben Jeddou (TUN)	–	–	3
Yodchingchai Sornthong (THAI)	–	–	4
Yuri Arbachakov (RUS)	–	–	5
Manuel Herrera (USA)	–	–	6
Pedro Alcazar (PAN)	–	–	8
Luis Cox (PER)	–	–	9
Angel Priolo (COL)	–	–	10

JR. FLYWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Saman Sorjaturong (THAI)	C	–	–
Pichitnoi C. Siriwat (THAI)	–	C	–
Will Grigsby (USA)	–	–	C
Yosam Choi (KOR)	1	9	–
Joma Gamboa (PHIL)	2	1	1
Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)	3	2	2
Oscar Andrade (MEX)	4	4	11
Phanieng Sasiprabha (THAI)	5	–	–
Edgar Cardenas (MEX)	6	–	–
Gabriel Munoz (MEX)	7	–	–
Ladislao Vazquez (MEX)	8	–	–
Hidenobu Honda (JAP)	9	5	–
Shiro Yahiro (JAP)	10	–	–
Medngon 3K Battery (THAI)	18	3	12
Pongsaklek Nakornton (THAI)	–	6	–
Hadao C.P. Gym (THAI)	–	7	–
Panieng Pontarat (THAI)	–	8	–
Yura Dima (MON)	–	10	–
Pedro Rodriguez (COL)	–	–	3
Gill Ikeda (JAP)	–	–	4
Anis Roga (INDO)	–	–	5
Ratanapol Sor Vorapin (THAI)	–	–	6
Asdrubal Velasquez (COL)	–	–	7
Carlos Murillo (PAN)	–	–	8
Manuel Jesus Herrera (DR)	12	–	9
Nelson Dieppa (DR)	22	11	10

STRAWWEIGHTS	WBC	WBA	IBF
Ricardo Lopez (MEX)	C	C	–
Zolani Petelo (SA)	–	–	C
Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)	1	8	–
Andy Tabanas (PHIL)	2	12	2
Daniel Reyes (COL)	3	11	3
Yasuo Tokimitsu (JAP)	4	–	–
Luis Lazarte (ARG)	5	–	1
Satoru Abe (JAP)	6	5	–
Ratanapol Sow Voraphin (THAI)	7	–	–
Myung Sup Park (KOR)	8	10	–
Jun Arlos (PHIL)	9	–	–
Rocky Palma (JAP)	10	–	8
Songkram Porpaoin (THAI)	–	1	–
Ronnie Magramo (PHIL)	–	2	–
Jose Garcia (COL)	–	3	6
Rocky Lin (JAP)	–	4	–
Randy Mangubat (PHIL)	–	6	–
Chana Porpaoin (THAI)	–	7	–
Payak Nakornluang (THAI)	12	9	–
Eric Jamili (PHIL)	–	–	4
Mickey Cantwell (GB)	–	–	5
Faisol Akbar (INDO)	–	–	7
Jose Laureano (PR)	–	–	9
Mongol Chareon (THAI)	–	–	10

RING CLASSIC

POWER vs.

By Dan Daniel

(Editor's Note: This is a condensed version)

The fight in which Rocky Marciano defends the heavyweight championship of the world for the second time, against Roland LaStarza of New York at the Polo Grounds on September 24, has many ultra-interesting facets.

In the first place, it sends against each other two fighters who refused to run each other down. They are willing enough to discuss each other. But only in a somewhat polite and refined vein. They talk about their first engagement, on March 24, 1950, in a 10-rounder in the Garden in New York. But they extol each other.

"It was too close for comfort," says Rocky.

"It was a good fight in which he showed me tremendous condition, and in which that low blow lost him his best round, the eighth," says Roland. Rocky got a split decision that night.

For Italian fight fans, for American boxing followers with Italian blood, the contest has a peculiar interest in so much as it involves two battlers of Roman lineage. When Primo Carnera, of Italy, was the champion, he made no title defenses against a boxer of Italian lineage. There have been no other Italian or Italian-American world heavyweight champs.

Interviews with Marciano at his camp near Grossinger's in the Shawangunk Mountains, near Liberty, New York, and LaStarza at Greenwood Lake, New York, some 70 miles closer to New York City, were both revealing, and interesting in disclosing personal facets of the two fighters.

In neither place was there the disposition toward horseplay, which used to be in evidence at Jack Dempsey's training camps, for example. Marciano is all business, and if LaStarza has a keener sense of humor, he, too, knew that he was engaged in a very serious enterprise.

In the 1950 fight, Marciano dropped LaStarza for a count of eight in the fourth round. The bell intervened. Asked if he believed the gong had saved LaStarza from a knockout, Rocky refused to take advantage of the opening. He replied that he did not know.

This was rather refreshing, as standard procedure in such cases calls for the interrogated boxer to emit a vehement, "Sure! I had the guy out!"

When Marciano was interviewed, he was sitting in front of

Heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano (left) and number-one contender Roland LaStarza (far right) spoke about each other in respectful terms prior to their heavyweight title bout September 24, 1953, at New York's Polo Grounds. Marciano won the first meeting of the two three years earlier by a narrow split decision.

From THE RING, October 1953

CLEVERNESS

his headquarters at the airfield connected with the Grossinger's Hotel. He was closely attended by Charley Goldman, his trainer, and Al Columbo, his assistant trainer and boyhood chum. They were pals at Brockton, were in the Army together, and have been together since Rocky went into the fight business.

In LaStarza, Marciano was meeting a very clever boxer. It was conceivable that, in view of the skill that Roland had shown three years before, Goldman and Marciano would be prompted to change their system and methods. Since the 1950 fight with LaStarza, Marciano had acquired one valuable asset, the ability to deliver combinations. Rocky displayed this valuable ability in his quick knockout of Jersey Joe Walcott at Chicago.

"You ask if we have to make any variations in Rocky's system of fighting for this scrap. I say, 'No,'" Goldman said. "Before we start training for a fight, some well-intentioned guys say, 'Better find some sparring partners with Louis' style, or 'Ye gotta hire a coupla guys with Walcott's shuffle.' Bunk! A fighter worth his salt adapts himself to the other's style within five or six minutes. If I concentrated on training for the opposition's style, we would give up too many benefits in general. Remember this. Marciano is not yet at his peak. He still is learning. The nose? No trouble at all."

While Marciano was training for the brief meeting with Walcott, he was said to have suffered a nose injury, forcing a postponement of a month. Rocky's work with his sparring partners had shown no nasal weakness.

Marciano's training drills were impressive from the sheer physical side, from the angle of power. His tremendous forearms, his sturdy legs and thighs, his strong shoulders and powerful neck, all shouted "Knockout!"

The spectators at Marciano's workouts were a strange conglomeration, as they would be at a swank summer resort like Grossinger's. There were wide-eyed children. There were just as many wide-eyed grownups. The vast majority of them may have seen a fight on television, but certainly a world champion in the flesh was all new to them. They looked on, they marveled, and Marciano shadow boxed, jumped rope, boxed a few rounds, jumped some more, and then chased around a little wooden platform with a new gimmick devised by Goldman. Marciano bounced a little rubber ball, and caught it at varying heights, and varying angles. He reached up, he bent low—and he perspired.

Then came the windup, and Rocky and Goldman returned to their cottage. I began to toss questions at Rocky about the 1950 fight with Roland. "Do you believe that, but for the bell, you would have stopped LaStarza in the fourth?" I asked.

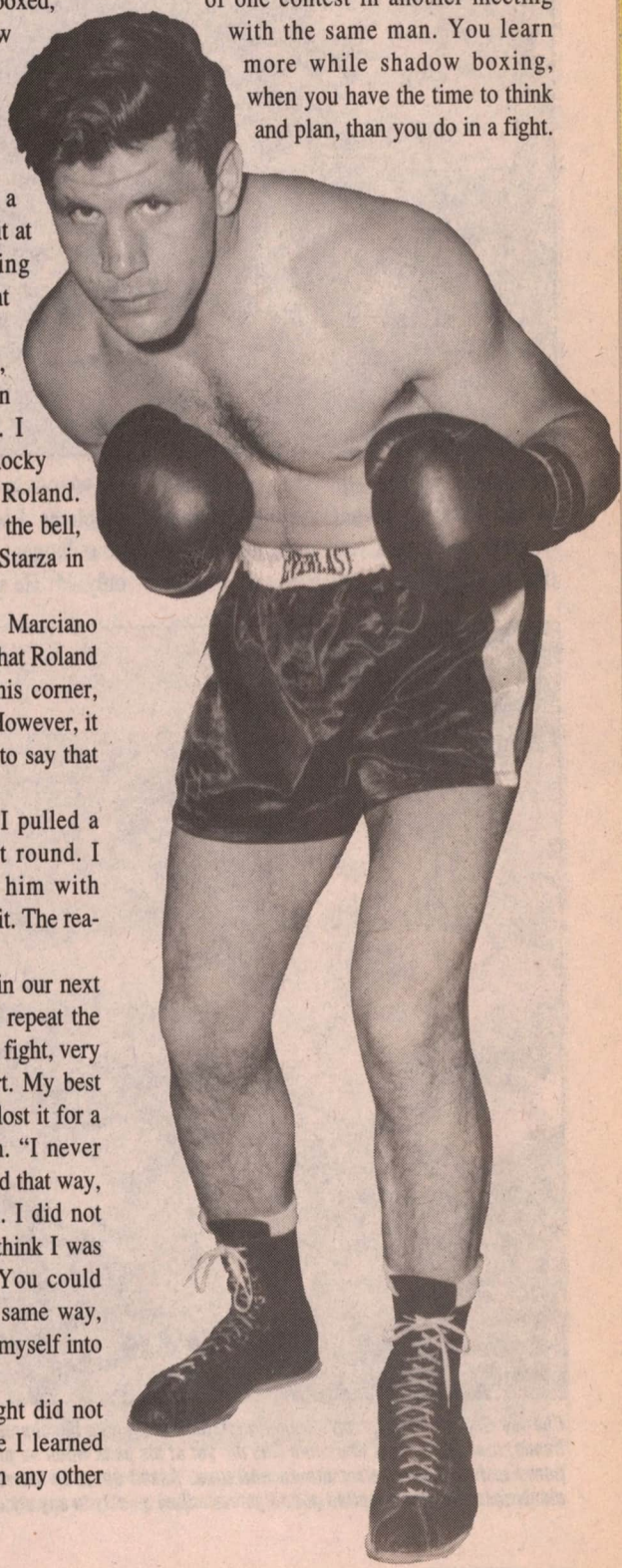
"Frankly, I don't know," Marciano replied. "They told me later that Roland had to be dragged back to his corner, and worked on pretty hard. However, it would not be honest for me to say that he was saved by the bell.

"One thing I do know. I pulled a miserable rock in the next round. I should have torn in after him with everything I had. I didn't do it. The reason? Lack of experience.

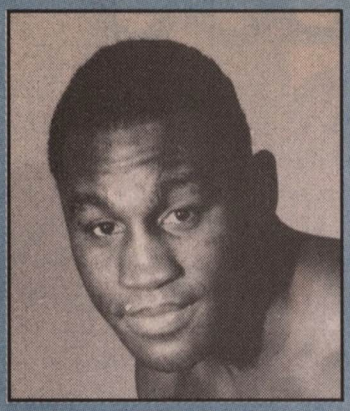
"If I ever get him down in our next meeting, I certainly will not repeat the mistake. It was a hard, tough fight, very close—too close for comfort. My best round was the eighth. But I lost it for a low blow," Rocky went on. "I never before had been fined a round that way, and it upset me very much. I did not know what to make of it. I think I was scared. I said to myself, 'You could lose the ninth and 10th the same way, and lose the decision.' I got myself into a small panic.

"The second Walcott fight did not go one round, yet I believe I learned more that night than I did in any other contest," Marciano said.

"You are wrong," Goldman insisted. "That is just an impression, not a fact. You learn little or nothing in a fight, except perhaps not to make a fatal mistake of one contest in another meeting with the same man. You learn more while shadow boxing, when you have the time to think and plan, than you do in a fight.



THE RING RATINGS, October 1953



Jimmy Carter

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Rocky Marciano, Brockton, MA
1. **Roland LaStarza**, New York, NY
2. **Ezzard Charles**, Cincinnati, OH
3. **Dan Bucceroni**, Philadelphia, PA
4. **Nino Valdes**, Havana, Cuba
5. **Tommy Harrison**, Oakland, CA
6. **Bob Satterfield**, Chicago, IL
7. **Heinz Neuhaus**, Germany
8. **Don Cockell**, England
9. **Earl Walls**, Edmonton, Canada
10. **Harry Kid Matthews**, Seattle, WA

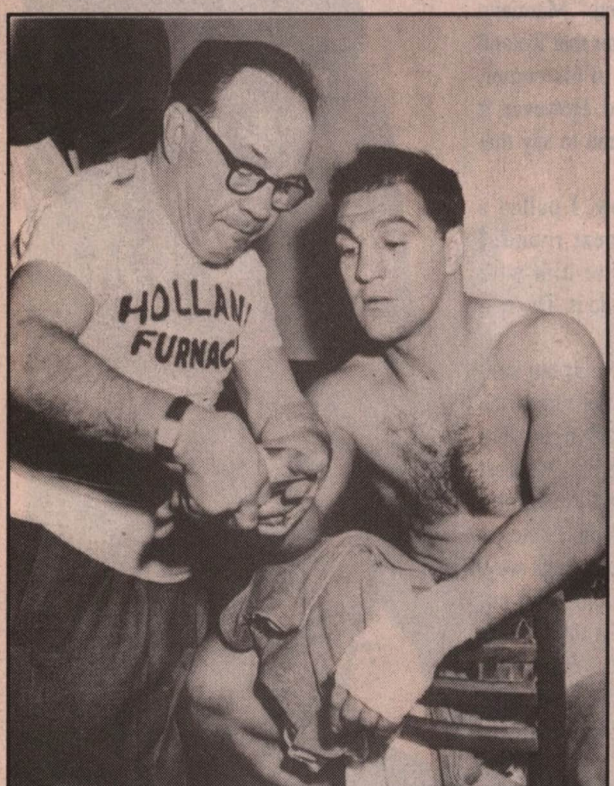
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Archie Moore, St. Louis, MO
1. **Joey Maxim**, Cleveland, OH
2. **Harold Johnson**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Yolande Pompee**, Trinidad
4. **Danny Nardico**, Tampa, FL
5. **Jimmy Slade**, New York, NY
6. **Larry Watson**, Omaha, NE
7. **Billy Smith**, Oakland, CA
8. **Gerald Hecht**, Germany
9. **Jacques Hairabedian**, France
10. **Floyd Patterson**, Brooklyn, NY

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Randolph Turpin**, England
2. **Carl (Bobo) Olson**, Hawaii
3. **Paddy Young**, New York, NY
4. **Charley Humez**, France
5. **Joe Giardello**, Philadelphia, PA
6. **Joey Giambra**, Buffalo, NY
7. **Rocky Castellani**, Luzerne, PA
8. **Ralph Jones**, Yonkers, NY
9. **Randy Sandy**, New York, NY
10. **Pierre Langlois**, France

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Kid Gavilan, Havana, Cuba

In a battle, you use up what you learned. While you are in there punching, you concentrate on hurting your man, not on getting an education.

"Anyway, each fight presents fresh problems. I believe that LaStarza presents your biggest problem to date. The kid is only 26. He is a fine boxer. He can avoid punches. He always is in fine shape. I see him in Stillman's, working all the time. The experts say LaStarza is the more clever man. On paper, the clever boxer should do better in his second meeting. Listen to me talking up LaStarza! However, facts are facts, and I never have liked to ignore them."



Charley Goldman, Marciano's trainer pictured here taping the champ's hands, maintained that Marciano was not yet at his peak when he prepared to face LaStarza for the second time. Asked about LaStarza's cleverness, Goldman replied good fighters adjust quickly to any style.

I asked if the fact that LaStarza never had gone more than 10 rounds might have some effect on this fight, scheduled for 15.

"If Rocky belts him out before the 10th, it won't have any effect at all," Goldman laughed.

"But, seriously, that angle is phony. If a well-conditioned fighter has been accustomed to 10, he can go 15. Unless he gets badly hurt.

"It's no factor," Marciano interjected. "I had gone 10 rounds only five times when I knocked Walcott out in 13. I was as fresh in the 13th as I had been in the seventh or eighth."

"I remember in 1904, I fought Eddie Gardner in Brooklyn, 42 rounds to a draw, with the cops busting up the fights," Goldman said. "Before that I never had boxed more than four rounds."

I asked Goldman if Marciano hit harder today than he did in 1950.

"His punching power doubtless is no greater, but here is the important thing, he now places his punches, which he could not do very well in 1950. There is fine coordination now between eye and muscle."

From the Marciano camp in the mountains, I hit the trail southward, to Greenwood Lake. There, at the Long Pond Inn, I found LaStarza training for that second shot at Marciano, for which he had waited three years. LaStarza was pitching horse shoes, while Jimmy DiAngelo, his manager, and Dan Florio, his trainer, looked on.

"After September 24, the guy who owns this place will be able to put up a sign saying that 'LaStarza, Champion, Trained Here,'" said Florio.

LaStarza laughed. "I don't care too

1. **Johnny Bratton**, Chicago, IL
2. **Gil Turner**, Philadelphia, PA
3. **Johnny Saxton**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **Carmen Basilio**, Syracuse, NY
5. **Billy Graham**, New York, NY
6. **Art Aragon**, Los Angeles, CA
7. **Gilbert Lavoine**, France
8. **Del Flanagan**, Dominican Republic
9. **Freddie Dawson**, Chicago, IL
10. **Ramon Fuentes**, Los Angeles, CA

LIGHTWEIGHTS

World Champ: Jimmy Carter, New York, NY

1. **Johnny Gonsalves**, Oakland, CA
2. **George Araujo**, Providence, RI
3. **Paddy DeMarco**, Brooklyn, NY
4. **Arthur King**, Toronto, Canada
5. **Wallace (Bud) Smith**, Cincinnati, OH
6. **Orlando Zulueta**, Havana, Cuba
7. **Eddie Chavez**, San Jose, CA
8. **Henry Davis**, Hawaii
9. **Armand Savoie**, Montreal, Canada
10. **Ralph Dupas**, New Orleans, LA

FEATHERWEIGHTS

World Champ: Sandy Saddler (U.S. Army)

1. **Willie Pep**, Hartford, CT
2. **Teddy Davis**, Hartford, CT
3. **Percy Bassett**, Philadelphia, PA
4. **Baby Ortiz**, Mexico City, Mexico
5. **Davey Gallardo**, Los Angeles, CA
6. **Roy Ankarah**, West Africa
7. **Charley Riley**, St. Louis, MO
8. **Lulu Perez**, Brooklyn, NY
9. **Alby Tissong**, South Africa
10. **Gene Smith**, Washington, D.C.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

World Champ: Jimmy Carruthers, Australia

1. **Robert Cohen**, France
2. **Billy Peacock**, Los Angeles, CA
3. **Henry (Pappy) Gault**, Spartensburg, SC
4. **Peter Keenan**, Scotland
5. **Maurice Sanderyron**, France
6. **Emile Chemama**, France
7. **Pierre Cossemyns**, Belgium
8. **Gianni Zuddas**, Italy
9. **Chamren Songkitrat**, Thailand
10. **Andre Valignat**, France

FLYWEIGHTS

World Champ: Yoshio Shirai, Japan

1. **Jake Tuli**, South Africa
2. **Tanny Campo**, Philippines
3. **Terry Allen**, England
4. **Louis Skena**, France
5. **Leo Espinosa**, Philippines
6. **Charley Bohbot**, French Morocco
7. **Vic Herman**, Scotland
8. **Nazzareno Gianelli**, Italy
9. **Eric Marsden**, England
10. **Young Martin**, Spain

much about that. I do want to prevent their putting up a plaque at the Polo Grounds saying, 'LaStarza Slept Here.'

"This is going to be the toughest job of my life. You see, you cannot expect to win a world championship merely by edging the titleholder on points. You have to present convincing evidence.

"I have to kill the virus jinx which has been hounding me ever since I became a pro. I had a virus before the Marciano fight in 1950, and was able to get in only 20 rounds of boxing, instead of 45, in training for that contest. I should have asked for a postponement. But Jimmy and I were afraid we would be side-tracked. I had a virus attack before my fight with Dan Bucceroni, on December 21, 1951. I lost. Now, that actually is my only real setback," Roland insisted.

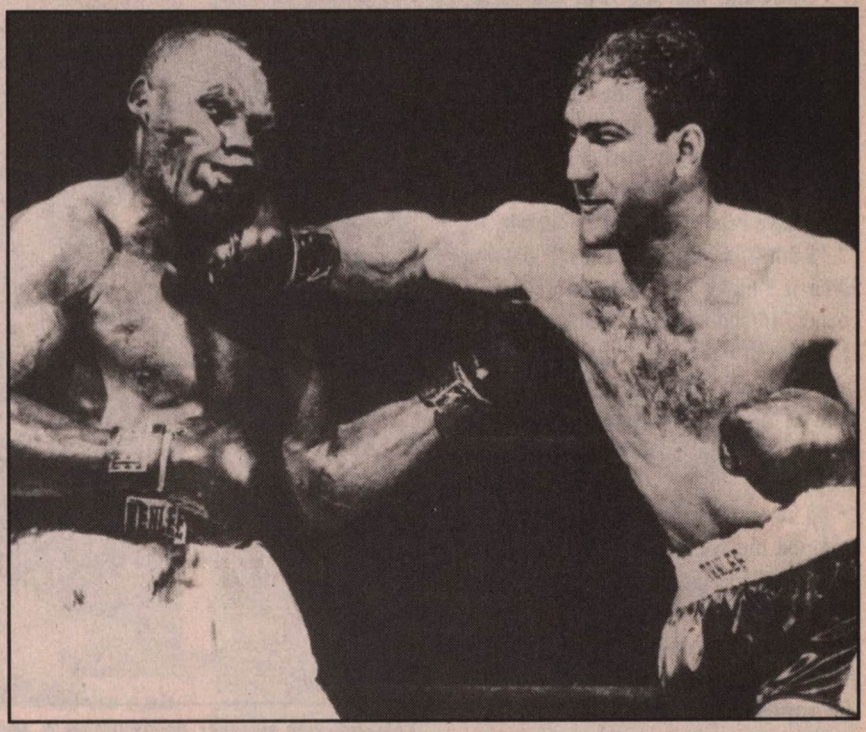
"The book says I also lost to Marciano, and Rocky Jones, in Akron. I beat Marciano, and as for the Jones decision, it was farcical. I beat him hands down. It was about as wicked a decision as has been pulled in boxing in 10 years. I won nine of the 10 rounds."

It was a hot day, and LaStarza talked about how fine it would be to be flying "up where the breezes blow."

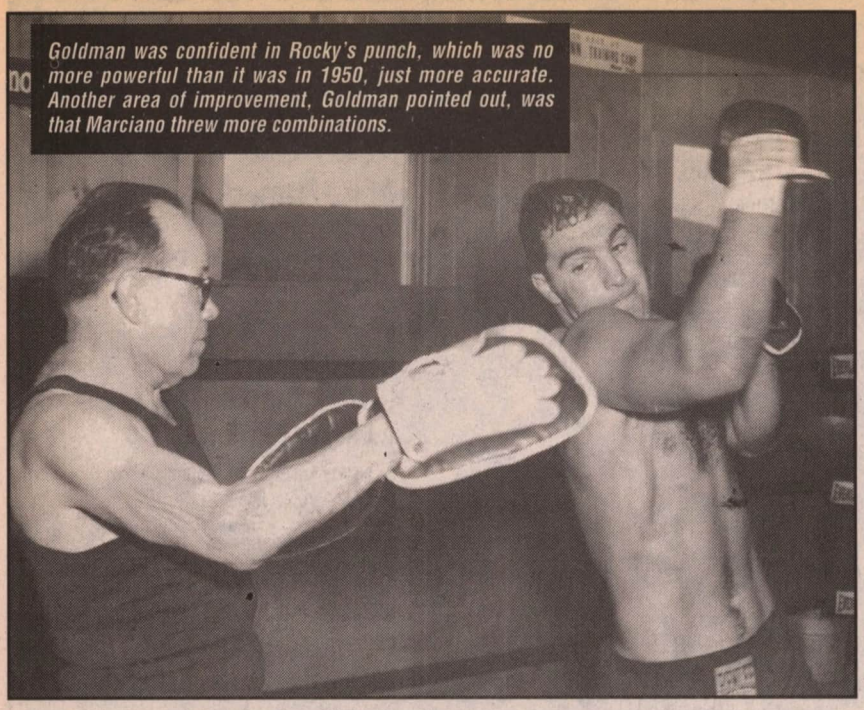
"It would be a lot of fun to be doing slow rolls in my Waco," LaStarza chuckled, winking in the direction of DiAngelo.

Roland is the only fighter of consequence in the American ring who flies his own plane. And a stunt ship, at that. His Waco is rigged with special protections against the stresses of upside-down flying, peculiar rolls, and other unorthodox maneuvers of which LaStarza is fond, and, understandably, DiAngelo is unfond.

"I did not fight and worry my way into this return match with Marciano to see you break your neck in a plane bustup," DiAngelo said to LaStarza. "If you win the title, I will buy you any plane you like—



Marciano beat champion Jersey Joe Walcott with his devastating power. Marciano said he learned more fighting Walcott the second time, a one-round knockout victory, than he had in any previous fight.



Goldman was confident in Rocky's punch, which was no more powerful than it was in 1950, just more accurate. Another area of improvement, Goldman pointed out, was that Marciano threw more combinations.

when you retire. I got that heart attack last year watching you stunt up there. No more of that."

Asked to talk about the 1950 fight with Marciano, LaStarza replied, "It was decently rough, not spectacular. I figured I won the first three heats. I was taking the fourth, too, when, eight seconds before the bell, he dropped me with a right. He got the round. That was the decisive thing in the fight.

"Marciano won the fifth and sixth. I don't recollect much about the seventh. He was big in the eighth. That is the truth. But he fouled me and lost the round. He had fouled me before that. I won the ninth and 10th rounds, but the two judges and the referee all gave him both of those heats. I never have been able to figure out why.

"I am a late starter. If hit, I wake up. Even if I never have gone more than 10 rounds, 15 should be my distance. That is, if he doesn't tag me. I just must not be tagged, in my first big chance, my first decent payday. I have been fighting professionally ever since 1947 and so far it has not paid off.

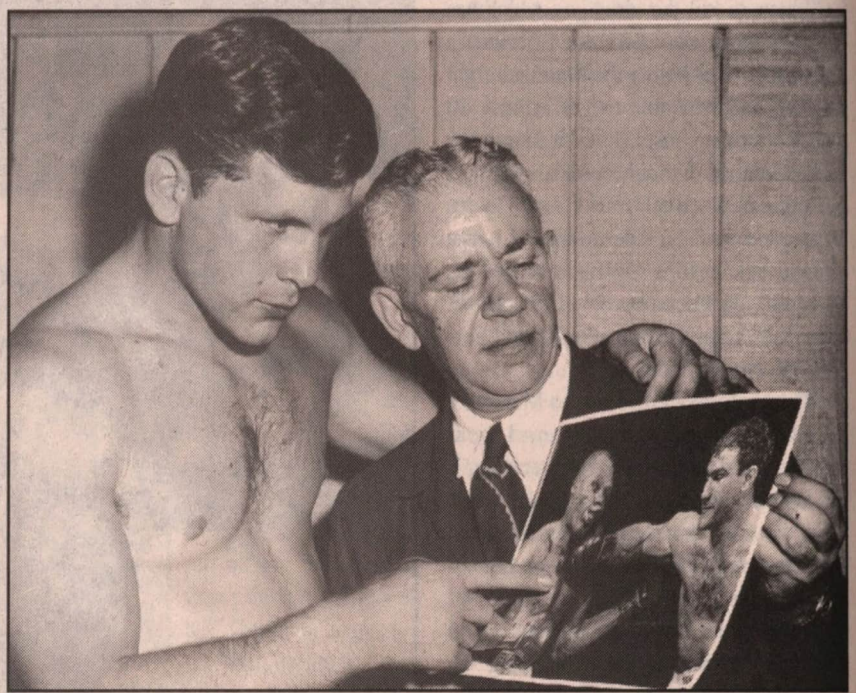
"The punch with which Marciano dropped me was not the hardest I have stopped. Gene Gosney, who knocked me down twice, hit me harder. He was a peculiar fighter, dashing out with a growl. I stopped his growling, and hung him over the ropes in the sixth. Walter Hafer knocked me down, too. Four times in my career. Not bad, not too good. However, nobody yet has knocked me out, and believe me, nobody is going to do it.

"Marciano? A tough fighter. Very rough. He takes a lot of punches to get in a few of his own. He counts tremendously on his condition, and his ability to absorb punishment. I am convinced that Rocky cannot continue to take such punishment. He certainly must be human. How much has Marciano improved? I have seen him fight, I have studied his movies, I have watched him on the television screen. I say he has not improved at all. He has picked up poise, and he has the confidence which comes to a man who holds the title. But he still has not learned to box, and I call him just a clumsy puncher who winds up for every blow. He does not hit cleaner or harder than he did in 1950. The best punch he showed me then was the one with which he scored the knockdown. But I was not hazy. I was not saved by the bell.

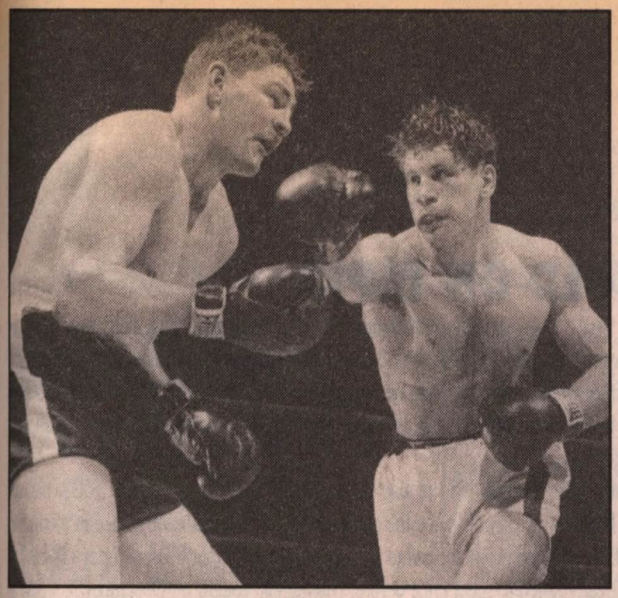
"I am 26. I should be in my prime. I have grown physically, and as a boxer, too, in the last three years. I have improved my left hook and can hit well with my right. The experts ignore me as a hitter. Sure, I don't send opponents to the hospital. But I do wear them down. I prefer my own system and method. Short, snappy punches, no missing, no waste of energy, no telegraphing of wallops.

"I never have been hurt. I still can think, still can count. And I still will have those faculties on the morning of September 25. The title? I am not a boastful guy. I have got myself the shot. Now it's up to me to take advantage of it, or take one of those offers in television. Maybe I was born to be an actor. Who knows?"

The Marciano-LaStarza fight will be a meeting of service men. Rocky saw fight-



LaStarza, with manager Jimmy DiAngelo, looks at a picture of Marciano destroying Walcott. LaStarza said he was never hurt in the first meeting with Marciano, even though he was knocked down in the fourth. He also stated other heavyweights had hit him harder than Rocky.



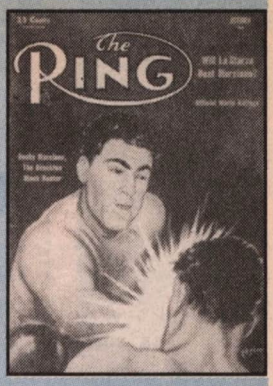
LaStarza, shown here winning a 10-round decision over Rex Layne in February of '53 just before taking on Marciano in September, felt he won his last meeting with Marciano in 1950.

ing in Europe. LaStarza was in Italy with the 349th Regiment of the 88th Division.

Years ago, it was predicted that some day a heavyweight with a college background would gain the title. In time, Steve Hamas, of Penn State, came along. But Hamas did not have it. Now comes LaStarza of the City College of New York, where he played varsity lacrosse. Will the campus finally land the title?

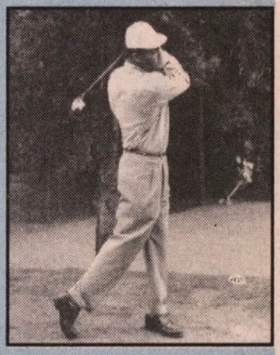
(Editor's Note: Marciano knocked out LaStarza in the 11th round.) ■

LaStarza received a visit from former heavyweight champ Joe Louis, who felt LaStarza could beat Marciano. Steve Hamas at one time was expected to be the first heavyweight champ with a college background. That onus shifted to LaStarza, who attended City College of New York.

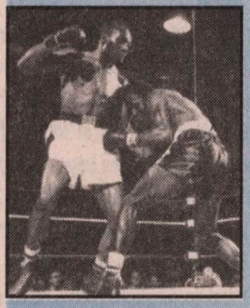


The Cover: THE RING was curious why a big puncher like Rocky Marciano lacked popularity. Other past heavyweight champs with a big punch had huge followings, but "The Brockton Blockbuster" could walk down a New York City street unnoticed. One theory was that the reason for Marciano's lukewarm appeal may have been his dismantling of Joe Louis, a beloved former champion.

The Big Break: Fighters like Billy Conn got their big break by beating established pros like Fred Apostoli, who Conn beat twice. THE RING also examined the emergence of Jim Braddock, the ultimate "Cinderella Man," whose defeat of heavyweight champ Max Baer established him.



Spare Time Fun: THE RING caught up with a few former champs to see how they occupied their down time in between fights. Joe Louis, for example, took up golf and was an excellent equestrian. Randy Turpin, the former middleweight champ, took delight in miniature railroads.



Styles Make Fights: THE RING discusses the different styles of fighters. After losing twice to the younger, faster Ezzard Charles, Jersey Joe Walcott employed a cagey, counterpunching style that helped him become the oldest heavyweight champion at the time.

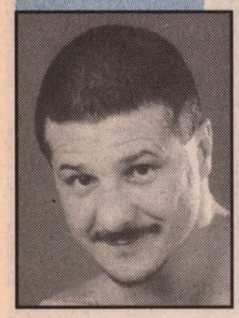
Fighter Of The Month: Nino Valdes earned himself instant credibility and a top-10 heavyweight ranking with a 10-round upset over number-one ranked contender Ezzard Charles in Miami. The Cuban also killed any chance of Charles meeting the winner of the Marciano-LaStarza title bout.

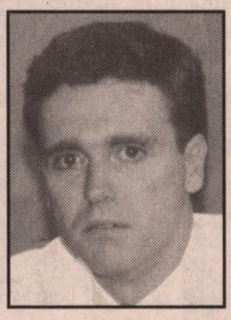
LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

HOLDEN'S GOT A HOLD ON TAPIA

For his last fight, **Johnny Tapia** made $450,000. That's not a bad chunk of change for a bantamweight. But when you consider that featherweight **Naseem Hamed** makes $2-million per bout, and Tapia's every bit as charismatic and infinitely more likable, you can make an argument that Tapia should be pulling in even bigger purses than he already is. Tulsa, Oklahoma-based businessman **Tony Holden** is making that very argument. And as Tapia's new promoter, he'll have a chance in the coming months to prove it.





Tapia and Holden: Teaming up for at least two fights

On January 20, Tapia's wife, **Teresa**, who is also his manager, announced that the WBA bantam champ was leaving **Don King**, his promoter since the summer of '97. A stipulation in Tapia's contract with King stated that the Hall of Fame promoter had to arrange a bout for Tapia within 45 days of his last fight, a deadline he had already failed to meet once before. Having last fought on December 5, when he won the WBA title from **Nana Konadu**, Tapia became a free man 46 days later. They immediately severed ties with King, who Teresa had said wasn't paying enough attention to her husband's career.

And less than a week later, Tapia had a two-fight contract with Holden, best known for his successful marketing of former heavyweight contender **Tommy Morrison**. Holden intends to promote Tapia, 32, for the remainder of career.

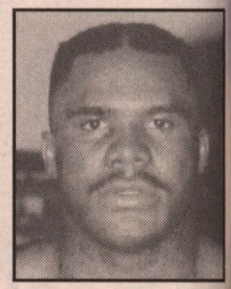
"I think Johnny's very marketable, and Don missed a lot of opportunities to build his stock," Holden said. "The only other little guy on or above Johnny's level of popularity is Prince Naseem, and he's got a widespread audience because so much effort has been put into marketing him. Johnny's a celebrity in the boxing world, but there's the potential for so much more.

"During his time with King, Johnny fought only once in Albuquerque, and that makes no sense to me. My aim is to get him packing out his hometown arena, in front of 18,000 screaming fans and a national television audience. That would be so much better for him exposure-wise than fighting in Atlantic City or on USSB, where no one sees him."

Expanding Tapia's audience may be important to both the fighter and his new promoter, but what the fans really want is to see him face the best opposition available, guys like **Tim Austin**, **Mark Johnson**, and **Jorge Eliecer Julio**.

"Johnny has one thing going for him," Holden said. "Austin and those guys are not household names. They need Johnny more than Johnny needs them. My first goal is to make Johnny a bigger star, but getting those fights should be relatively easy."

LISTEN UP



Ibeabuchi: Going Byrd hunting

Looking for Hamed to take a step up in competition in '99? Well, it's not gonna happen when the British "Prince" returns to the ring on April 10 in his homeland. But while opponent **Paul Ingle** is a complete unknown in America, he is not just some undeserving nobody. "The Yorkshire Hunter" is the European featherweight champion, and, at 26, is not over the hill like so many of Naz' challengers. Ingle sports a 21-0 (13) record that includes kayo wins over former world title challenger **Moussa Sangare** and one-time Hamed victim **Billy Hardy**. Does he have a prayer against Hamed? Probably not. But his last name should at least inspire a determined effort from The Prince ... If **Larry Merchant** called the **David Tua-Hasim Rahman** fight last December the most important fight of 1998 (not knowing, of course, that it would end so inconclusively), what must he be saying about the battle of young heavyweights HBO is televising on March 20? Two highly regarded unbeatens, **Chris Byrd**, 26-0 (14), and **Ike Ibeabuchi**, 19-0 (14), will duke it out, with the winner perhaps supplanting **Michael Grant** at the top of the future heavyweight champion derby.

FUTURE FIGHTS

By Art Manteris

VP/Director of Race and Sports Operations Las Vegas Hilton SuperBook

Las Vegas Hilton

Favorite	Underdog	Odds	The Skinny
Mike Tyson	George Foreman	2½-1	One fight too many for George
Roy Jones	Steve Collins	10-1	Jones has way too much speed
David Tua	Hasim Rahman	Pick-'em	Anything can happen in rematch
Floyd Mayweather Jr.	Roberto Garcia	10-1	Floyd could beat them both on the same night
Floyd Mayweather Jr.	Goyo Vargas	10-1	

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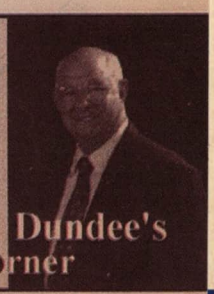
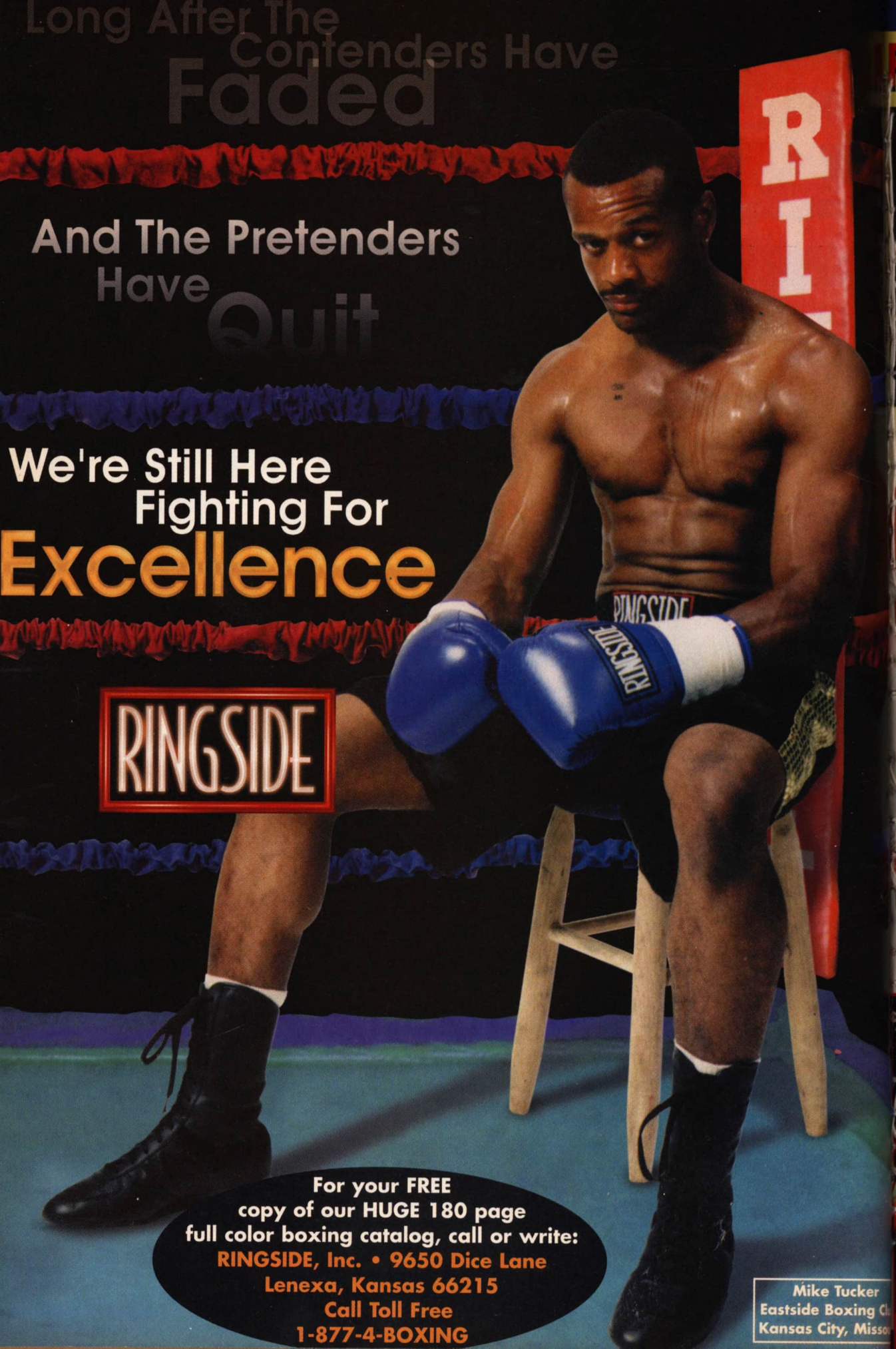


Angelo Dundee's Corner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